

# SELECTED STORIES OF FRANK HARRIS

moulin digital editions



2023

# CONTENTS

A PROSTITUTE

WITHIN THE SHADOW

THE IRONY OF CHANCE

A FOOL'S PARADISE

AN ENGLISH SAINT

THE MAGIC GLASSES

A FRENCH ARTIST

THE UGLY DUCKLING

THE HOLY MAN

THE RING

MR. JACOB'S PHILOSOPHY

THE MIRACLE OF THE STIGMATA

## A PROSTITUTE

*Published in the collection The Veils of Isis (1915)*

IT had been a great evening. We had spent it in an *avant-scène* at the Opera in Nice, listening to *The Messaline* of the famous English musician whose operas are played in every European capital oftener than in London. The composer had been “called” by the public a dozen times and had been kissed on both cheeks by the somewhat voluminous prima donna to the delight of the audience. Now he was giving supper to three or four of us at the Casino. It was the night of the entrance of King Carnival, and the whole of the Place Masséna was thronged with the gay excited crowd.

The supper was excellent; but the eating and drinking were only incidentals, the background, so to speak, of the picture. The passionate music was still throbbing in our blood; the splendid defiance of the Gladiator’s death-song still rang in our ears and the excitement called forth the true qualities of the guests to unwonted expression.

A world-famous Belgian novelist told the astoundingly simple, passionate life-story of Aimee Desclée, the great French actress of his youth. Henri Bauer, whose likeness to the great Dumas makes him famous, related some of his experiences during the Commune, and described the miseries he had undergone as a convict in the French penal settlements on the other side of the world. “*Assez bizarre*,” was the novelist’s comment; “it is the convicts and criminals to-day who are steering humanity, and molding the society of the future.”

But neither M—’s story, nor Bauer’s experiences made such an impression as a very simple episode recounted by a Russian-Pole, a M. Rhimanski. The incident is like a burr in my memory and refuses to be dislodged, and I still ask myself whether it was the narrator and his way of telling the story, or the story itself, which turned for me a mere occurrence into a sort of event.

Rhimanski, I had been told, was a superb ’cellist, and as soon as he began to speak one noticed that his artistry was not limited to music. In manner he was reserved and quiet—almost subdued; in person, unremarkable; just over middle height, loosely made, and slight, with ordinary brown hair, mustaches, and beard, a low forehead, Calmuck nose and gray eyes. The brown mustache did not prevent one seeing that the lips were sensitive and finely cut; a deep furrow running down the forehead lent a certain look of age or thought to the face. A man of thirty-five or so, whose attractions were not on the surface. I should never have noticed him were it not for his story, and that was brought

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

in quite naturally; but he told it with the brevity and suggestion of a master.

Bauer's experiences, I remember, had been interrupted by the entrance of a party of noceurs who seated themselves at the next table to us—two or three young rastas with some gay ladies from Monte Carlo whose pictures were in every shop window. Bauer stopped short, and the conversation naturally turned to the oldest of the professions. Interest in it was shown by the novelist, good-humored toleration by Bauer, when Rhimanski suddenly took up the ball:

"Why don't you write an opera about it?" he questioned de Lara; "nothing has been done yet, nothing, and it is the most enticing, absorbing theme. In his *Maison des Morts* Dostoievsky has a curious page about the dignity of the convicts in Siberia—the 'unfortunates' as the inhabitants call them. The contempt of others, he declares, increases the vanity and self-assertion of the outcasts. That side of prostitution, too, should be studied. . . . Then there is the whole terrible education to be pictured, the rose dreams and facile high enthusiasms of the girl, all blotted out by the knowledge of the brute, man: the drama of desertion and abuse, the tragedy of the street and the sewer—the massacre of the innocent. What an opera to write, what a Bible!

...

"I was in Paris as a student ten or fifteen years ago, very poor, living the usual life. Very much in love with my little friend . . . devoted to her in truth. . . . The other day coming out of the opera—I play at the Opéra Comique—a friend took me to supper at Durands. While we were talking a lady came in, a lady with her *bonne*. She had a cup of chocolate. I felt that I knew her, and yet I was uncertain; I was puzzled by her face; it was distinguished looking; but I could not be sure. As she got up to go I saw that she moved well, carried her head—a little proudly; in a flash I was sure and had gone over to her:

"'Surely I'm not mistaken, Madam, you are Marie?'

"'Yes,' she returned quietly, 'I knew you at once.'

"I was delighted: 'When can I see you?' She seemed cold and not agreeably surprised as I had expected. But I persisted; I was overjoyed to see her; she was part of my lost youth. . . . I went out with her and found to my astonishment that she had an automobile at the door.

"'My chief pleasure,' she said deprecatingly, 'I live at Auteuil. Paris deafens me, and I love the Bois, and the environs of Paris, the drives, the trees and the river.' . . .

"'You must come to lunch with me,' I cried, 'I must have a talk with you. I missed you so dreadfully for years and years, and have thought of you so often.'

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“‘You left me,’ she said, ‘because you said your mother was dying.’

“‘I was astonished by something sarcastic in her tone.

“‘It was true,’ I said. ‘Her illness called me back to Russia; my mother was nearly a year dying. That’s how I lost sight of you. I could not think of even you in her suffering.’

“‘Oh,’ she said, as if half convinced. ‘I thought it an excuse.’

“‘How could you?’ I exclaimed. ‘Does one invent excuses when one is in love?’

“Her face grew cold.

“‘When I returned to France,’ I went on, ‘I hunted for you everywhere, but could not find you. I had a little money and was so eager to share it with you.’

“‘You still play the ‘cello?’ she asked with polite indifference.

“‘Yes, yes,’ I cried, ‘I’m now the first ‘cellist at the opera. But losing you took away the brightness of life for me. My youth seemed to die when I lost you. My mother and my first love went together. It sounds sentimental, but I cannot help it: it is true. . . . How could you have believed that I invented excuses to explain leaving you?’

“She lifted her eyebrows to me slowly. It was an old gesture of hers. Her eyes were very fine, nut-brown and long; she used to lift her eyelids as if they were tired, slowly unveiling the great eyes.

“‘If you knew the lies men tell us,’ she said.

“‘You are happy?’ I asked. ‘You have succeeded?’

“‘Oh, yes,’ she replied carelessly, ‘I too, was wise in time; one must be reasonable. ’Tis in this world we live, and after we have been used by men, we learn to use them.’

“‘You must not be bitter,’ I said. ‘Come tomorrow, and we will have a feast. Come.’

“She yielded to my eagerness; said she would pick me up on the morrow at the corner of the Boulevard and the *Rue Royale* where I promised to be at twelve o’clock.

“‘I must go now,’ she went on, ‘my *bonne* will be astonished. I never speak to strangers,’ and she glanced at the automobile where the *bonne* was fidgetting—a little impatiently, I thought. What could I do but thank her and take her to the carriage. It slid round the corner and vanished, and I was left staring at the church of the Madeleine opposite, and the trees outlined against the solemn spaces of the sky

....

“I had not recognized her at once, and yet she had not altered much. Fancy not knowing Marie, with whom I had had such joyous days and nights. She had grown strangely dignified and quiet. How

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

gay she used to be; interested in everything and interesting. I tried to call it all back again; but the gorgeous life was gone; it belonged to the past, it was all dead like a long disused room where the dust lies thick

....

"Next day I was at the appointed place at the exact moment, and almost immediately she drove up in her automobile. She looked more like the old Marie: there was a smile on her face.

"You are punctual, I see,' she said. 'Won't you have a turn before lunch? It is only just midday, and I seldom lunch till half-past twelve.'

"It was last May; the chestnuts were just coming out in the Avenue and in the Bois. We whirled along the white road and past the great arch, which always recalls Napoleon to us Russians, and I learned something of Marie's later history. She was always articulate, what you call expansive, and her frankness used to please me as much as her gaiety, for I was always brooding and melancholy.

"She had met a man of sixty, it appeared, and had lived with him for eight or ten years. He was disillusioned, she said, yet kind at bottom; the sort of man one thinks in youth very common, who is rarer than a perfect black pearl.

"He died a year or so ago, and left me enough to keep me in ease, so I take pleasure in going to the theater and opera, and coming back to the house which he bought for me. You see I have a little girl, a younger Marie . . .' and she half-smiled again. . . .

"It all seemed pathetic to me, I don't know why: something transitory in it all and faded like an old portrait done in tapestry. . . .

"When we turned she asked:

"Where shall we lunch?"

"You don't think I have forgotten your taste,' I cried. 'Let us go to that big *brasserie* on the Boulevard, where you get the best beer in Paris.'

"Beer?" she replied, 'I detest it: I cannot drink it, it makes me ill; I never could stand the stuff.'

"There must be some mistake,' I replied. 'You always used to drink beer. You said you liked it better than anything. Don't you remember? We used always to go to the *brasserie* at the corner. You cannot have forgotten the suppers of *museau de boeuf* and beer—you loved it all.'

"I remember,' she said, and a half smile stole over her face, and the heavy waxen eyelids drew up, 'I remember; but if you please, you will give me wine now. I prefer wine.'

"As you like,' I replied, a little disappointed. 'Shall we go to Durands? Though I don't suppose you will get *museau de boeuf* at

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Durands.’

“‘I don’t like *museau de boeuf*,’ she pouted.

“‘Really?’ I cried, and I could not get over the wonder, but I followed her lead and at Durands ordered what she wanted—the ordinary conventional lunch, a little sole, the *plat du jour*, and a bottle of sound light claret.

“We talked of a thousand things, recalled a thousand memories: in an hour she had become as gay and vivacious as the Marie I had loved so passionately.

“‘Tell me,’ I said at last, searching still for the key of the mystery, ‘why you smiled when I recalled your old liking for *museau de boeuf* and beer?’

“‘Haven’t you guessed?’ she asked, ‘I never liked either of them. I hate them.’

“Astonishment was still upon me; she laughed again a little.

“‘I knew you were not rich in those days, my friend,’ she said, touching my arm lightly with her fan, ‘so I pretended to like *museau de boeuf* and beer, because they were cheap. . . . I cared for you, you see . . .’ she added gravely.

“‘I was struck dumb. . . .’

Rhimanski stopped speaking. His long fingers played with his wine glass; while his eyes stared into the noisy white square unseeing.

After a pause de Lara said: “Yet many good people would be ashamed to speak to Marie; they would call her a light woman, a prostitute. . . .”

“What wonderful creatures Frenchwomen are!” cried the novelist. “Such relations between men and women in France are often almost perfect; no coarseness in them, nothing like your hideous Piccadilly Circus, your brutal prostitution. Here even viciousness is not gross.”

“I don’t agree with you,” said the Englishman slowly. “That doesn’t seem to me the true moral of the story; indeed, properly considered, the true moral seems to me very different. It seems to show not the superiority but the inferiority of Frenchmen.”

“What do you mean?” cried the Belgian. “That is the wildest paradox I ever heard.”

“Much more than a paradox,” said Henri Bauer, “it is ridiculously absurd.”

“Come,” said de Lara, “won’t you explain?”

“I can perhaps explain,” said the Englishman, “in terms of art, though I should despair of trying to explain ethically. I think Frenchmen are quicker to see esthetic reasonings.”

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"I don't care how you do it," said the French novelist, "to attempt to justify such a paradox will be amusing."

"Suppose you went into a house," began the Englishman, "and found all along the walls copies of the finest pictures in the world, good copies, excellent copies, let us say. Let us even go further still and say that there is really taste shown in the picking of the masterpieces. Would you think the man a critic of art, a connoisseur of the beautiful? You would almost admit, wouldn't you, that a man who had such copies of masterpieces had no real sense of what art was? For consider, the very thing that the copy has not got is the peculiarity that makes the great picture; the soul of the masterpiece is lacking. All the rest is there. The imitation is superb if you please, but the soul is not there, and it is the soul you love in the masterpiece."

"That is all right," said Bauer, "but I don't see any application; I see no similarity even in the two cases."

"A moment," replied the Englishman. "You say you have copies of love on all hands in France that are almost as good as the real thing. You say that the goodness of the copy proves your high civilization. I say it proves your low appreciation. If you knew what love was, the master-virtue of love, you wouldn't have an imitation at any price; the imitation is always without the soul of the masterpiece, and it is the soul you want, the highest reach of it."

"In England and in America, in Germany and in Russia there is more or less the soul of love, and copies of it are disdained, and even the best of them not much appreciated: but in France and in Japan, where you have not got the real thing, where the passion of love itself is almost unknown, the imitation is excellent and you are content with first-rate copies."

"The English have the ideal, and alas! the Piccadilly Circus also; but the Piccadilly Circus properly considered is a proof that we do know what the ideal means?"

"A superb argument," said the Belgian novelist, "but still I think it a paradox."

"There is no doubt something in what you say," replied de Lara, "but you must admit that Marie at any rate had some of the essence of true love in her, at least the noble self-sacrifice of it."

"Surely," replied the Englishman. "The essence of true love may be found in illegitimate unions. I am not contending that the master virtue has to be blessed in church."

"I agree with you," cried Rhimanski, "that it is the self-sacrifice that redeems and ennoble love."



WITHIN THE SHADOW

*Published in the collection The Veils of Isis (1915)*

ALICK WILSON was from Leith. He had gone to sea as a lad, and now at twenty-five was chief officer of the passenger steamer *Amazon*, which plied between Hong Kong and Shanghai. He was a handsome fellow, with blue eyes and fair mustache, and more than the brains of the ordinary sailor. Wilson had chosen the Eastern Service because the advancement was quicker, the pay higher, and also a little because the East drew him; China in especial, with its strange customs and incomprehensible spirit, excited his curiosity, attracted him as what is unknown and extraordinary is apt to attract the young and romantic. The pull of China upon him was so overpowering that within a week after seeing Shanghai for the first time, he began to study Chinese seriously. Now, after three years' work, he knew the language, both spoken and written, fairly well, and found the knowledge profitable. But China itself and the Chinese were still a closed book to him; he knew enough to be sure that the ordinary English sailor's view of the people was silly to absurdity, but he was still utterly in the dark as to what the Chinese really were, and what they desired; their customary thoughts and their ideals alike hidden from him. This year, however, 1909, was destined to open his eyes to many hitherto undreamed-of things.

In Hong Kong they shipped a Chinese passenger of great importance, the Mandarin Phang, who had been sent on a mission to Tokyo. Phang was an ordinary Chinaman of the south, small of stature and of very quiet, retiring manners. Wilson thought him old, because the fixed, impenetrable, beady black eyes were darned about by innumerable tiny wrinkles, but he might have been only fifty or so, to judge by his walk and appearance. He was evidently a man in authority, for his secretary was always obsequious to servility. The other members of his suite were all women, but neither Wilson nor any other of the personnel of the *Amazon* had seen them near at hand. They had come on board at night, having taken the chief apartment, and spent most of their time in their rooms. For an hour or so each day, however, they came up on the main deck to take the air, but on these occasions they kept strictly to themselves and seemed afraid even of speaking above their breath to each other, much less to any of the ship's crew or officers.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Still, it became known that one of them was old Phang's wife, and, according to the stewardess and second officer, she was very young—a mere child, not yet sixteen—and very pretty. Wilson heard the talk, but paid little attention to it. He realized by this time how impossible it was to get to know a Chinese lady of good class. Besides, he had his work to do, and it was engrossing, and, if that were not enough, he had made large purchases on his own account in Hong Kong, and was a good deal occupied with plans for securing the largest possible profit.

For the first three days the weather was ideal; a little hot, as it is apt to be toward the end of June, but very pleasant, tempered with cool airs from the north, and the sea was calm as a lake. On the Thursday afternoon, however (they had left Hong Kong on the Monday), the outlook changed; the sun went down in a blaze of color, the lofty bell of sky without a cloud, and yet Captain Malcolm would not leave the bridge, and was evidently uneasy, though one could hardly say why. About nine o'clock the moon climbed above the horizon, a moon like a conflagration—a red wafer—promising fine weather, and yet none of the old salts standing about could rid themselves of apprehension.

Suddenly Wilson went into the Captain's deck cabin to consult the barometer; in a trice he was back again and on the bridge beside the captain.

"The barometer is falling, sir," he said, "as if the bottom had dropped out of it."

"We're in for a typhoon," remarked Captain Malcolm quietly; "luckily a screw steamer can't be taken aback like a sailing ship." And he added: "You'd better step below to the Pigtails and warn them of the bad weather, and put everything shipshape for them. I'd go myself, but their lingo is beyond me."

Without a word, Wilson hurried below and made straight for the Mandarin's stateroom; he didn't even step into his own cabin on the way to tidy it up a bit or put things straight. He knocked at the stateroom door and, after a pause, in which he seemed to feel himself scrutinized, the door slid open and discovered Phang's secretary. Wilson blurted out what he had to say, but before his story was ended he was allowed inside and asked to explain by Phang himself, who was with his wife in the saloon.

Wilson told them what there was to fear, in Chinese, and offered to go into their bedrooms and secure whatever was loose or breakable, but while he was speaking the shock came, and the ship was thrown almost on her beam ends. As luck would have it, Wilson was

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

to leeward of the pair, and as the ship heeled over and they were flung downward, he had time to stem his foot against the sofa and catch them—one in each arm. Phang went green, but lost nothing of his polite self-possession. As the ship righted herself a little he begged Wilson to help him to his bedroom, as if no one existed save himself. Without a word Wilson placed the girl gently on the sofa behind him; her veil caught in one of the buttons of his coat, and as he drew away their eyes met—a moment only, yet Wilson felt as if he had been taken possession of; never had he had such an impression. As he helped Phang to his room he couldn't help saying to himself: "How extraordinary! What did her eyes say? What does she mean?" And then, with a start of astonishment: "How lovely she is; she might almost be English!"

The vessel had already begun to roll, for she was very light and the sea was beginning to get up. Phang evidently felt the motion, for he turned ashen; he did not complain, however, but lay down and asked for a drink of water. As Wilson turned to get it, the girl came into the room and fell on her knees by the side of the bed. "What can I do?" she cried.

"Go to your room, flower of the waters," replied Phang, "and send my secretary to me; this sickness can only be relieved by sleep. . . ."

They must have been caught by the whirling skirt of the storm, for instead of passing through it in a few hours, they had it all night and nearly all the next day, and when the wind went down the waves still continued to run high. A dozen times that night Wilson went below to minister to Phang's comfort, with the unavowed hope of meeting the girl-wife again, and finding out what her enigmatic, arresting look really meant; but she kept to her own room.

Next day Phang was worse, and Wilson had to persuade him to see the doctor. When he returned with the surgeon his heart stopped; for the girl was kneeling by Phang's head. A word from her husband and she kept her place, though she had already risen to go. The surgeon made a careful cursory examination, and promised to send some medicine with directions. While this was going on Wilson, standing behind him, had ample time to study the girl without being seen by the husband. Her face was the rather long oval that the Chinese admire and regard as a mark of distinction; the hair and eyebrows were the purple-black of her race; the eyes were long and large; in color the clear brown of the coffee bean, and this, with the dark pupil, gave them, Wilson decided, the peculiar intense expression which had such an effect on him. In figure she was very slight, and evidently still immature. Did she notice his intent scrutiny? he asked

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

himself. She kept looking from Phang to the doctor as if no one else were in the room, and yet, surely, she must have felt Wilson's mute admiration. As the doctor, who had been his screen, moved, Wilson dropped his eyes and turned with him to the door, first casting a careless look round the room, as if the proceedings had rather bored him.

All through Phang's illness, which lasted three or four days, he was in and out of the sick room, for he was the only officer on board who understood Chinese, and the captain and doctor had to use him as interpreter. Perhaps because of the services he rendered Phang, he got to like him, as we usually like those we help. He admired, too, the extraordinary self-control and secretiveness of the old Mandarin. And one day, when the doctor said half a day in the open air would cure him, Wilson sent the doctor up to prepare the couch near the coop, and then took the old man in his arms like a child and carried him up and laid him on the sofa. Phang's hard features relaxed into a sort of smile as he said: "The thanks of the weak to the strong!"

After this the pair had several talks, and Wilson confessed his desire to understand Chinese ways and modes of thought. Phang told him that he would feel honored to show him his humble dwelling. As it drew toward evening Phang felt the cold and Wilson volunteered to run down and fetch him a wrap. He opened the stateroom door, turned to the left into Phang's bedroom, and found himself face to face with the girl. Their eyes met, and involuntarily he held out his hands. With a little cry she came to him, and as he took her lips, conscious life passed into intense feeling. A moment later, it seemed, she shrank back listening, with finger on lips, and then turned her back to the young man and busied herself in setting the bed to rights. Wilson asked for a wrap, and murmuring an excuse, as if she had just become aware of his presence, she laid a quilted silk garment on the chair near him. As Wilson took it and moved to the door, the secretary came in smiling. Had he seen or heard anything? Or had the girl been too quick for him? Wilson couldn't decide, and so hurried on deck.

Without further incident of note, except some long and interesting talks between Wilson and Phang, they reached Shanghai. A few days after they parted, Phang sent his secretary to Wilson to ask him to his house. He found as he expected—a palace, with a mean front to the street, but luxurious within, almost beyond belief, and set in a huge garden with a pagoda at the end furthest from the house. From the beginning Wilson flattered the old man assiduously, which might have given rise to some suspicion had he not at the same time plied him, Scot-like, with innumerable questions about his life and beliefs,

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

and the hidden reason of ancestor-worship, and a score of similar mysteries. Again and again he returned to the house and drank tea with the old Mandarin, and walked in the garden; but never cast eyes, even for a moment, on the girl-wife, and, of course, never asked after her.

Two or three days had elapsed since his last visit, when, one evening, in his English hotel, a letter was brought to him by the waiter; in it was a strip of rice paper with the words in Chinese, "The pagoda one hour after sunset."

His heart fluttered into his throat with excitement; he never hesitated, never doubted; but gave himself up at once to considering ways and means. Almost instinctively, sailor-like, he had taken the bearings of the house, and within half an hour after getting the note he had found the back street and the dead wall behind which was level with the roof of the pagoda. He passed on his way, staring about and whistling, as if wholly unconcerned, for he had always in mind the picture of her starting back, listening intently with chin out-thrust and startled eyes and uplifted warning finger.

As he dropped off the wall that night and stepped into the deeper shadow of the pagoda, a tiny hand took his, and the next moment she was in his arms. Silently they crept into the pagoda hand in hand like children. . . .

Almost at once he was struck by her utter unlikeness to anyone he had ever known or read about. She seemed to give herself to her instincts as unconsciously as a healthy young animal; for some time he thought she was free even of coquetry. When he praised her beauty, and especially her eyes, she would not have it; she was not well-born, she said; her feet were common and her nails also; Phang, on the other hand, was of really high blood and distinguished-looking; though he was so old and cruel.

"I don't know why he wanted me," she said; "he doesn't any more. I think he hates me. . . . I was eager to love him when he married me; now I hate him. He's cold like a snake and one day he'll sting. . . ."

All this was said under her breath. It was only when Wilson insisted that she would speak at all, seeming to dread the slightest sound. In breathless whispers, mouth to ear, she told him that Phang had gone for a week to the Governor of the Province; but when he joyously cried: "Then there's no danger!"

"Hush! Hush!" she breathed. "There's always danger in China. Does Phang know even now of our love? Did he invite you here to make sure? Is there one of his spies on the roof or under the floor?"

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Was I followed gliding through the garden, or you striding carelessly along the street? Who shall say? But danger, my white savage,” and she caught him to her heart, “there is always danger in China, always death following close behind you—and me,” and she clung to him. “But after all, love, with death at the end, is better than life with that old man. Oh, how fear quickens love!” she cried, and kissed him in a frenzy of passion as if love alone could banish the dread. . . .

Every meeting increased their passion, but her vigilance didn’t slacken; and bit by bit her fear and desperate courage and sheer force of affection won him to deeper feeling. But, Scot-like, he wanted to argue:

“You talk of danger,” he began, “but Phang liked me, I think; at any rate, he always welcomed me. He wouldn’t have done that if he had suspected anything?”

“Oh, dear,” she wailed, as if in pain. “You don’t understand us Chinese. Phang will show you the same face always, even the day you perish by his orders. His vengeance passes to its aim, and makes no sign, like a knife through water. He may wait for years, but he will never forget. Oh, believe me, and take care while it is time!”

“But you?” he asked.

“Oh, I’m doomed,” she replied carelessly. “I counted the cost and made up my mind to pay it when your eyes first drew mine in the cabin; there is no chance of escape for me. Don’t talk; what does it matter! Already I ought to be gone. . . .”

And a little later, like a wraith, she was gone, melting like a shadow into the shadows, and leaving her lover half afraid—of he knew not what . . . .

\* \* \*

Every night he took more care; her assurance of danger infecting him, and pity grew strong in him as he began to realize her martyr-passion.

She found strange words to convince him. “Does your fear make you regret?” he asked once; she laughed noiselessly.

“Do you know what I regret?” she whispered. “That I shall never see your white body, never know you exactly, never have a perfect image of you to console me in the long years when my being is melted into the line of my ancestors and lost as vapor in air. . . . Last night I wept all night thinking of it. . . . You will return to your country and some of your own women will strip you, laughing, and kiss your breast and your great limbs, and know every little bit of you, better than they

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

know themselves; but I never shall. I touch you and touch; and I weep because my fingers are blind and have no sight-joy in you."

He took her in his arms and kissed her, all shaken by the intensity of her passion.

\* \* \*

One night it rained heavily and Wilson hurried, threw himself over the wall, and was first in the pagoda; a minute later she came and, divining his presence, went straight to him in the dark.

"You love me!" she cried. "You are early, but you're wet," she added.

"It's nothing," he said, kissing her, and she gave herself to his embrace with hot lips and mute intensity. "I would ravage you to-night," she whispered, touching him with throbbing silken fingers.

When he came to reflection it struck him that she was braver than heretofore, spoke out loud, was less reticent than usual; he wanted to know the reason.

"Phang comes back a day sooner than he said," she answered, and her voice was grave. "To-morrow is our last night."

"Oh, what bad luck!" he groaned. "Damn him, he might have given us a day more instead of less."

"You don't guess what it means?" she asked, and then: "I'm sure Phang knows and did this to punish us; it is the beginning of his revenge."

"Nonsense, dear," he cried; "it would be silly, childish."

"We are all children," she replied gravely, "and children can be very cruel."

"Is that the reason you are bolder to-night?" he asked.

"Greedy," she replied simply. "What does it matter now? Perhaps in his rage he will make a quick end."

His heart shrank into a tight knot with pain; but his courage revolted:

"If he touches you," he growled, "I'll kill him like a dog."

"Oh, you child," she exclaimed, sighing. "He will strike so that you will know only what he wishes you to know; but don't let us waste the precious minutes; don't rob me of my joy," and she nestled back in his arms with a sigh. . . .

Next night he came to her and said: "To-day, as I was walking along the street that leads from our church to the water, a huge stone fell from a roof and almost crushed me. What luck it didn't, eh? Or I should not be here to hold you and kiss you."

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

She fell from him as if she were broken, and in the dusk he could see her eyes white with fear. He lifted her to him and she moaned:

“Oh, I was sure! Oh, take care, take care; I’m sure, sure.”

“Sure of what?” he asked.

“Sure,” she said, “that Phang knows and will revenge himself. He is learned among the learned, and rich besides, and riches can do anything in China. Oh, take care!” and she threw her arms about him and strained him to her breast as if to convince herself by touch that she held him and he was safe.

“Take care or he will have you killed,” she whispered. “Killed as if by accident, and no one will ever know the truth, and your spirit will not be able even to hope that your murderer will be punished. . . . Take care of what you eat and what you drink. Take care of your steps on the quayside and your shadow on the wall. Take care when you go to bed and when you get up. Ah I If you should die, I’d hate myself forever. . . .”

“Don’t fear for me,” he cried, “or for yourself; I have prospered and I can take you with me. I will not leave you to danger. . . .”

“Thank you, thank you,” she triumphed. “I love to hear you say it, though it can never be. It joys me to hear you.”

“But why can’t you come?” he continued, getting more resolved, man-like, as he felt himself more likely to lose her.

“Can you pluck a flower and plant it in the ground and think it’ll grow?” she asked. “No, no, you savage man! we have had our week of love, a pearl-week, perfect, and I shall go to death thinking you wanted me for always, my white god! You would have taken me with you if you could, and I shall be happy in death thinking of that, and the cold of the grave will not chill me. . . .”

That night they were late, for he couldn’t bear to let her go, and she seemed willing to stay, eager to do his pleasure in every way. Later it filled him to the lips with misery to think of how she yielded to his every wish at once without sign of fear.

Again and again they embraced, and she said: “Do not come till you hear from me. If indeed by a miracle we have escaped, it must be months before you visit Phang again, and when it is wise I will send you word; but I feel sure to-night is the end of our joy. Never mind. You have made me so happy that I do not care what comes now.”

And he said: “I go across the sea again, and as soon as the ship returns I will visit Phang.”

At the door she held his face long in her hands, perusing it in the half-light, feature by feature, and of a sudden was gone.

Next morning Wilson went aboard cheerfully enough; he had had



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

a great holiday, he thought; the future seemed bright and his sailor-work pleased him. Hoasen's forebodings were mere girlish extravagance. For some days he was too busy to give thought to anything outside his duties. Now and then doubts flashed across his mind, but he brushed them aside. Once on the high seas again, his mind swung back of its own account to his experiences in the pagoda, and he was surprised to find that scene after scene stood out clearer in memory and more significant than it had appeared at the time; touches he had forgotten came back—words, looks, kisses. . . . He could discover no reason for it, no explanation. Day by day, too, he became more surely aware that her fears had some foundation; certain of her phrases set him a-shiver, heart-sick with fear. And all the while, hour by hour, his passion for her grew; so delicate of body she was, and so brave, so passionate that she stayed late that last night, though sure of death, to amaze him with her delicate caresses.

Before he reached Hong Kong he knew that his proposal to take her away with him and marry her, which he had thrown out without reflection, just to please her, was the outcome of his deepest nature. The conviction held him; he should have taken her with him that very night and brought her on board the *Amazon*. He was independent, had money—all at once he felt he had made a hideous blunder.

As soon as he got off duty at Hong Kong he sought out Chinese merchants and put supposititious cases, but could extract nothing from them—a pretty girl, more or less—their long eyes grew narrower in amusement. He frequented the club and found that those who knew China best were inclined to the belief that Hoasen's fears were justified—"A Mandarin of the first rank could do whatever he pleased with an unfaithful wife." The heartache in him grew desperate.

Even Captain Malcolm soon remarked his uneasiness; the younger officers tried to joke him about it, for Wilson was a favorite; but he minded nothing, literally the deck burned him till he got the order to "let go!"

As soon as he reached Shanghai he begged for leave, and went straight to Phang's house. If he had thought of danger it would have stilled his pain to affront it, but as a matter of fact he went in irresistible impulse without thought. The old Mandarin received him cordially; inquired after his health, his fortune, wished him all good things with suave politeness, and Wilson, restless, nervous, dared not put the question that trembled on his lips. He felt like a bull tied to a stake and baited; his blood boiled in him; yet he could do nothing, nothing; could frame no word that might not do harm, and now he knew that he was being played with; that Hoasen was right, that this old withered

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

creature was enjoying his embarrassment, savoring his own vengeance. If only he had the proof. He looked down at him, and the muscles on his arms and chest grew taut as whipcord—he would strangle him where he stood. Those impenetrable stony eyes (snake's eyes, he thought savagely) met his placidly, and the wrinkled yellow face smiled and Phang continued his courteous phrases while accompanying his visitor to the very door. There he paused and his smile became pensive:

"I have had a great loss since I saw you last," he remarked casually. "My wife, whom you may remember on the steamer—I was absent a week nearly—she must have caught a chill, for when I returned she became ill" (and his eyelids fluttered reflectively) "and died."

"Died!" Wilson repeated, choking. "Died!"

The old Chinaman blinked his eyes several times as if in tender regret, and then, cordially: "But you will come again and give the old man the pleasure of your youth, and health, and—"

Wilson was in the street dazed. Dead, his love dead. He tore his collar loose and hurried to the hotel and shut himself in his room. Dead! How? The old snake! Why hadn't he trodden on his head! He couldn't believe it. How to make sure? Who could help him?

At some time or other he had heard, as everyone in Shanghai has heard, of Shimonski, the Polish interpreter, who was practically a Chinky himself and knew China as he knew his pocket. The very man! If anyone could solve the riddle, Shimonski could.

Wilson sought him out, and after some hours ran him to earth and got speech of him. He was in such deadly earnest, obsessed by such passion, that Shimonski listened to his story and then, rubbing the short red bristles of his unshaven chin, he remarked coolly:

"I've heard something about this . . . Hoasen, you say her name was . . . I've heard of her. There was something peculiar—I can't remember what. But I'll find out exactly and let you know in a day or two. You don't mind spending a little money? No. All right. You shall hear."

Three days later he came to Wilson.

"I know everything," he began. "There was no trouble about it. Phang's secretary is a scholar; I am a scholar; for four pounds he told me everything. . . ."

"Your Hoasen was called 'The Flower of the Waters,' probably because she was pretty and very slight—the Chinese prefer fruit that is not quite ripe. . . . Phang found out your intrigue himself when he was ill on board your ship."

"But there was nothing to find out then," interrupted Wilson.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“Nothing.”

“Yes, there was,” Shimonski persisted. “Phang saw you staring at her. There was a mirror in front of his bed in which he could see you, and he saw, too, that Hoasen was conscious of your admiration, that is, had already accepted it in her heart. (The Chinese never deceive themselves about facts; that’s their strong point.) He had to go away, but he seized the occasion to have Hoasen watched. Everything said and done in the pagoda was reported to him. Why, once when you swung yourself over the wall, you almost fell upon the secretary; he chuckled over it to me!

“When Phang returned he greeted Hoasen and a little later went to the Chief Judge, a friend of his. But as he wanted the guilty punished in the way of his own Southern Province, he must have prepared it all, even before he went away for that week.”

“What do you mean?” cried Wilson. “Are these people human?”

“Oh, yes,” replied Shimonski, “but they are cruel, too; indeed, they take a sensuous pleasure in refined cruelty.

“Before I tell you the story you must know that Phang has gone into the interior and is now beyond your reach. . . .

“Well, to resume: He returned and told Hoasen that Hoan, the magistrate, wanted to see her, and if she wished he would accompany her to his court. The girl no doubt guessed what that meant. Phang had the state palanquin out; the girl-wife dressed herself in her best, and they went off to the court; but, as she crossed the threshold, Phang turned quietly home.

“Hoasen got out of the palanquin and found herself face to face with Hoan; nobody else in the courtyard but a huge elephant in one corner with his two attendants and a block of stone. Hoan told her that her husband accused her of adultery and had given proofs. Because her ancestors were known to him he had sent his officials away, trusting that force would be unnecessary, and being very desirous of sparing her the shame of open accusation.

“Having said this, he held out his hand; she took it and he led her toward the elephant. As they drew near, one of the attendants came toward them carrying the block of stone. Hoan left her and walked out of the courtyard.

“The attendant put the block of stone before Hoasen and begged her to lie down and put her head on it. Without a word, she did as she was told, and as he squatted in front of her his companion came toward them with the elephant. When the great beast was quite close, his attendant began teasing his front leg with a little switch. At first the elephant seemed unwilling to do what was required of him. He shifted

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

his weight from one foot to the other uneasily, but after a tap or two he lifted his right foot and put it down quietly on the girl's head, which squelched like a ripe mango."

### THE IRONY OF CHANCE

(After O.W.)

*Published in the Collection Unpath'd Waters (1913)*

MORTIMER was always rather peculiar. He and I were at Winchester together and about the same age; we took our removes regularly and so saw a good deal of each other. He was unlike other boys—strangely proud and sensitive. I remember the occasion when his curious temperament first came to notice and gave his life a bias. He was very quick at mathematics and things generally, but he had a poor memory for words and wrote shocking verses. One day—we had just got into the Lower Fifth, I remember, and were doing some hexameters—the Form master spoke to him contemptuously. Mortimer flushed and frowned, and, as the master ceased, closed his book sharply and never opened it again. He would not be schooled any longer, he said, by an ill-bred bully, and from that day on he did no more Form work.

As he never went in much for games, the time soon hung heavy on his hands, and, to my surprise, he began to take up chemistry and was always in and out of the laboratory. Our science master at Winchester was a redheaded Irishman, called Moriarty, lusty and strong to all appearance; but of the most nervous and timid disposition. Inordinately proud of having secured a willing student, he humoured Mortimer a good deal, and the two became inseparable. As I soon passed into the Upper Fifth and then into the Sixth, I met Mortimer only at intervals. But our friendship continued; for, with all his pride, he was gentle and affectionate, and I always liked him greatly: I hardly know why. He was nice-looking in his own way: a clean, mouse-coloured English boy, with appealing gray eyes.

In October, 1882, I went to Balliol, and Mortimer came up to Oxford in the following May. My two terms' seniority, the demands of the river on my leisure, and the fact that I was reading for Honour Mods. and afterwards for Greats and a Fellowship, while he stuck to his chemistry, prevented me from seeing much of him. Later, too, he kept a good deal to himself and went in for abstruse, visionary studies: interesting, if you like, but vague and unprofitable. Yet I envied him

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

the money which made it possible for him to follow his bent and read what he liked: liberty is always seductive to the young. But, though we fell apart, whenever we did meet, the old liking showed itself as strong as ever. Sometimes he would look me up and have a talk. Now and again he spoke of his ambitions, or rather, of his hopes: when you come to deal with the mysteries, hopes are as much as you can have. One day he fairly startled me. I had been talking to him of my work, and had mentioned, casually, a Greek manuscript, recently discovered, of part of the *Bacchae*, a palimpsest, when I noticed that Mortimer was gazing into space as if he were not listening. I shut up rather huffed; but he turned to me at once, in his charming, eager way, and begged me not to be offended.

"Your mention of a palimpsest," he said, "led me to think of what the scientific equivalent of a palimpsest would be, and I came on rather an interesting idea. Suppose strong sunshine beating on a rock. Every shadow of man or beast cast on the rock modifies the sun's influence, and so leaves an imprint, however faint, on the stone. Fancy if, in time to come, we were able to read such a palimpsest, and print off for you photographs of Plato and Sophocles from some rock on Colonus. Wait a little, my friend, science will yet decipher palimpsests a great deal more interesting than your sheepskin puzzles."

The idea was curious, and Mortimer was in earnest, I saw; but, of course, the thing was impossible.

In due time, I took my First, and afterwards was lucky enough to get a Fellowship at All Souls. Then I came to London, and was called to the Bar. I lost sight of Mortimer completely, and for years scarcely heard of him. I knew, however, in a vague way, that he had gone down to his people in Wales, and had been a great disappointment to them. He would not enter any of the professions, nor marry, nor take on himself any of the accepted and usual burdens of life. He grew more and more solitary, and at last went and built a cottage and laboratory on the coast of Cardigan Bay, with money left to him by his mother, and there spent some of the best years of his life, more like a hermit than a reasonable human being.

Years passed: I had just taken silk, indeed, when I heard of Mortimer again. He was lecturing in London and the provinces, and scraps of his talk came to me from time to time, filtered through the daily papers. One or two phrases that had escaped the mangling of the reporters interested me:

"Laws of nature and ideas in the mind are correlatives, and suppose each other as eyes suppose light."

Again:

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“Spiritual forces are only mechanical forces raised to a higher power, and will yet be found more efficient—even in industries.”

These, and other such cryptic utterances, rather attracted me.

People thought Mortimer a little mad; he pretended to be able to work miracles, they said, and told wild stories about him which I had neither the time nor the inclination to investigate. Mortimer was the last person in the world, I thought, to play thaumaturge or to try to impose on anyone. I was dumbfounded when the news came of the scandal at Birmingham. Mortimer accused of cheating and swindling! Impossible! In my indignation I tore up the paper that held the news, and pitched it out of the brougham window. I was on my way down to chambers when I read the account. That very afternoon Mortimer came into my office.

He had changed greatly. The light-brown hair was gray; the slight figure had lost its spring; the hands twined nervously; the patient, appealing eyes even seemed to have lost their candour.

“Can I have a talk with you?” he asked, as our hands met.

“Surely,” I replied. “I am glad you came to me.”

He threw himself into my armchair with a sigh, and ran his hands through his hair; then suddenly jumped up in the old abrupt way.

“Pack them all off,” he said, speaking quickly, “your clerk and everybody, and let us have a talk. I want your judgment of me and no one else’s.”

He was so nervous and excited that I humoured him. I gave my clerk three or four messages for solicitors and sent him away, and then went outside and “sporting my oak.” I was surprised at myself. In spite of all I had to do, and a dozen engagements, I was as eager as a girl to hear Mortimer’s story. When I came back to him, I filled my pipe, drew up another chair, crossed my legs on it, and said:

“Fire away! the court is with you.”

He seemed to find it hard to begin. He took out his handkerchief and drew it backwards and forwards through his nervous fingers, a gesture I remembered from the old days at Winchester. At length, with a troubled sort of face:

“I must go back to the beginning,” he said, half defiantly, half apologetically. I nodded encouragement, and he went on:

“You know I worked at science at Winchester. I did a good deal there with Moriarty; he was a painstaking teacher, and I got a fair idea of inorganic chemistry from him. At Oxford I did a lot of gas analysis and some physics; and then I went to Heidelberg and spent four or five years with Bunsen in his laboratory.”

“Did you really?” I broke in, wondering how he had found the

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

time. "It must have been interesting."

"More than interesting," he rejoined. "Bunsen, you know, was the man who discovered the spectroscope. Curious, wasn't it? About 1850, Comte declared that there were two things which would never be found out as long as the world lasted; two secrets of which the keys would never be entrusted to man: one was the origin of life, and the other, the chemical composition of the stars. Within ten years of the day he made the prediction, Bunsen used the spectroscope and showed the chemical composition of the stars. I was two years with Bunsen as an assistant: he paid me for the last year and a half; so I suppose I was of some use to him. I could not persuade him, the last of the great analysts, that the day of synthetic chemistry had come; but I was assured of it myself, and, when I went down to Wales and started a chemical laboratory, it was in order to practise synthetic chemistry, and not analytic. My family was bothering me to settle down, as they called it; but I had other things to do: more important things, I thought. That problem of the origin of life was always in my head: a sort of tantalizing mirage, and I had ideas that seemed to lead to it—fascinating glimpses of the light. Plato talks about the unity and universality of life; but Plato had no idea that plants are as much alive as men and women. Long before I had read any botany, I knew that there must be plants which lived by eating: plants which could nourish themselves on meat and insects; plants which could move from place to place; plants in which the sap pulsed like blood: one life, one law, one plan, throughout creation. And, just as there is no gap between vegetable and animal life, so there is no gap between organic and inorganic existence; the being of stones and gases and metals must be subject to the same law, swayed by the same force, moving to the same end; a thought in the mind of man is a law in the furthest star."

He paused for a while, and when he began again it was with a half-humorous smile:

"Curious, isn't it, Jack? Knowledge used to bring scepticism; to-day it brings belief. Modern scientists have found that 'vibrations pass through space which cannot be propagated by matter.' They have therefore had to invent ether; the materialists themselves compelled to give matter a companion soul—extraordinary discovery, eh? But, long before this undefined 'ether' was invented, I had made matter and spirit my starting points. . . .

"How much I did, I don't know, I don't intend to talk about it; I want to come to the heart of the matter. I made some curious discoveries: I found very soon that one can fuse and mix bodies without regard for their different atomic weights. You understand, don't

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

you?”

“No,” I answered, shaking my head; “I have no scientific knowledge at all.”

“Well,” he said, “let me make it as simple as possible: oxygen has a certain atomic weight and hydrogen also, and, in order to mix them, you must put two volumes of hydrogen with one volume of oxygen. You see, the greater and the meaner do not unite easily in gases any more than in human beings.”

I looked at him in amazement, but he went on quite seriously, with his head propped on his hand:

“And if the gases refuse to mix, you heat them, or pass an electric spark through them, and they unite at once—an electric spark,” he repeated; “we call it love: don’t we?” he added.

After a pause, he began again, almost as if he were lecturing, I thought:

“So-called inanimate bodies will unite for all sorts of reasons, or, if you like the scientific jargon better, they will unite under various conditions: for instance, put gold and lead together at a certain temperature—say, 18 degrees Celsius—and you will find that the gold will slowly interpenetrate the lead, and in time make one with it. This simply means that the atoms of both metals are in a constant state of motion or vibration: there is no such thing in nature as stillness or death.”

He broke off and turned to me abruptly:

“You remember a story in the Bible how a woman touched the hem of Jesus’ garment and he turned round to see who it was, for he felt that virtue had gone out of him. I always knew that was true, literally true. . . . Well, just as electricity helps us to mix gases, so I found that electricity helped me to fuse metals and mix them, and, when I had no electricity, I could mix them by personal magnetism, if virtue sufficient were in me. Again you shrug your shoulders and don’t believe me: I suppose you are right not to: but it is true, nevertheless.

“At length, I resolved to do something that would convince you sceptics, and I set to work with a sort of moral idea before me. If I can prove this unity and universality of life, I said to myself, surely men will grow more pitiful and more kindly to all forms of being; more gentle, too, in humility of kinship. Even now we are careful of horses and dogs, birds and flowers that subserve our pleasures; but very cruel to animals and snakes and insects that can hurt us, and utterly heedless of stones and metals which seem to us without sensation. I hoped to make a larger sympathy potent and effectual.”

“But you don’t really believe,” I interrupted, “that stones and



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

metals can feel? You might almost as well say that they can think.”

“Have you ever considered,” Mortimer replied, “why it is that you can pass quickly over thin ice which would break if you stood still upon it? No; eh? Well, it is simply because ice wishes to remain ice: tries to resist strain. You show disbelief in your face,” he cried; “but will you believe Haeckel, of Jena, perhaps the first scientific authority in the world? Here are his words: ‘Matter and ether are not dead, and moved only by extrinsic force; they are endowed with sensation and will; they experience an inclination for condensation, a dislike for strain.’ Now are you satisfied? The life of stones and metals may be simpler than your life: they may have fewer sensations than you, but they also live, if motion and feeling and will are proofs of life. It was this truth that I divined and resolved to establish. I sought a proof simple and sufficient beyond denial or doubt.

“I determined to fuse metals together in such a way that they would do my bidding: that the mass would come when I asked it to come, go when I told it to go, stand still when I bade it stand still, and so prove that the spirit of man is that of God, and rules throughout creation.”

He looked up suddenly; but I was listening enthralled: his enthusiasm had infected me. He continued:

“I went to work to fuse my metals, and first of all I fused three metals, I don’t know why; mere superstition, I’m afraid; though I have found that most superstitions are fragments of forgotten knowledge; and then I fused nine metals, because, as you know, the figure nine shows curious properties in multiplication and division. Still I failed absolutely. At length, I fused seven metals into a great ball, probably because seven was a sacred number in the past, but there it would take too long to tell you about my experiments, particularly as it was chance which put me on the right track after all. One morning I found my ball, wobbling and imperfect indeed, instead of the perfect sphere I had hoped for, but still a ball. At first I was almost in despair, and then—puzzled. The colour of the thing was superb: it had the play and light on it of steel, and the glow of gold, and was beautiful exceedingly. But it was not round. While I looked at it, Jack,” and, as Mortimer spoke, he put his hand on mine, “the truth came to me in a flash: of a sudden I saw that it was the shape of the earth, the sphere flattened at both Poles, and bulged at the Equator, a perfect model of our earth. Jack,” and he sprang to his feet, “the laws that made the world had made my sphere, and, in my exultation, I knew I had succeeded,” and he began to pace up and down the office, “for I called the ball, and it rolled and wobbled towards me, and I sent it away, and it rolled away,

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

and I told it to stop, and it stood still: I was as God.

"All this," he said, as he came back to the chair again after a long pause, "may have little interest for you, but it drove me nearly mad: for the curious part of the matter is that, though I went to sleep that night with the magic ball by my bedside, exultant and content, and awoke refreshed and happy; yet in the morning I had lost my power. It was heart-breaking: I spoke to the ball, and it did not respond; and after the one gorgeous moment of power and accomplishment, I had weeks of dull disappointment and failure and doubt—yes, doubt: for, in time, I even came to doubt whether my success had not been a hallucination, a deception of fevered senses. At length, I put the ball out of mind, and took up some other work; and suddenly, one day, I perceived that I had regained my power over the ball, and could make it do whatever I wanted, and as proof to myself, I called it up the stairs after me, and then out upon the beach—I could have knelt and kissed the mark it left on the powdery sand.

"Months passed, and years, and I got no further. Sometimes for days I had control of the ball, and then of a sudden the power would leave me, and I was plunged into hell. It seemed to me often as if the fault were not in me, but in the ball itself. That makes you start," he cried; "but think: how did the ball hear without ears, and move without force? Surely, it must have had mind and will; at any rate, that's my belief. But whether the fault was in me or in the ball, the result was the same. For weeks despair would lie on me, crushing me; and then a change would come, and I was master again, and king. One thing upheld me: it seemed to me that, gradually, I was getting more and more control over my strange companion; the periods in which the ball disobeyed me grew shorter and shorter, and my mastery over it became more and more complete.

"But the imperfect tortured me, and the alternations of hope and fear broke down my health. I got nervous and fanciful; and, in my loneliness, weaker and weaker. I found out then, Jack, that, just as there is no limit between what is possible and what is impossible, so there is no line between sanity and insanity. Curious, isn't it? As soon as we think of our bodies, we are unwell; and as soon as we think of our minds we are on the verge of madness. I grew afraid of myself, and determined to change my mode of life. Besides, I had become very weak, and did not dare to wait any longer, lest my secret should perish with me. True, my discoveries were not so important as I had once hoped they would be; but it was better, I reflected, to tell a little than to let all be lost: for there were myriads of generations coming after me who would do that which I had failed to do, and bring to

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

fulfilment that which I had only begun. With this thought in my head, I came up to London and began to lecture. The change did my health good, and I got to love the work: though, of course, it was elementary. I delighted to show by a hundred analogies that the laws of physics were laws of thought; that there is a positive and negative in the electric current corresponding to the sex-division in man and woman; that our notion of expediency is the law of least resistance; and that the passion of love is the law of gravitation, and moves stars and suns as easily as boys and girls.

“And when I told them from the platform that I would give them a proof of all this, and described to them how I had fused and mixed the seven metals, and how, after many disappointments, the great ball had taken the shape of the earth, and how it would hear and obey me, come to me when I told it to come, go away when I told it to go away, and stand still at my command, people believed me who would not otherwise have believed my teaching, nor even have cared to listen to it. Like children, they were pleased with the puzzle, and nothing more. The secret of life which I had discovered hardly interested them, and the mysterious kinship of man, not only with the other animals, but with that world of inorganic elements which seems to our dull senses motionless and dead, left them utterly indifferent. It was the miracle, Jack, which they had come out to see.

“One night, I was tired, and the ball responded badly, scarcely moved at all, in fact, and the people laughed and hooted, and some wanted their money returned. They sickened me with disappointment, and, afterwards, that impression grew upon me, and, the more I thought of it, the more frightened I became. You can understand, can't you? The whole of my teaching endangered, because the visible proof was not always with me. The dull generation that wanted a sign was not easily satisfied.”

As he spoke, he rose, and paced up and down the office. When he began again, he spoke slowly and with long pauses, as if he were tired:

“And so, Jack, temptation came to me. It was a story of Edgar Allan Poe that gave me the idea. I cut an opening in the ball, and got a little boy who could enter it and move it as he liked from the inside. It took me only a week or so to construct the mechanism. You disapprove, I see,” he said, turning to me. “But, think; after all, it was only making certain what was usual and ordinary.

“Besides, I hardly ever employed the boy—my word of honour—he was not necessary. His mere presence gave me confidence, and I went on for weeks successfully. I lectured here in London and then

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

in Leeds and Liverpool and all through Scotland, without using the boy at all.

"It was at Manchester, on my return South, that I first noticed a man in the audience: a man with an evil face. He sat there sneering disbelief at me while I talked. I could see envy and hatred in his eyes, and I grew afraid of him. His influence was evil, and my second night at Manchester I put Walter in the ball: I had lost confidence. . . . Evil affects us even when we resist it; sometimes I think it affects us more when we resist it than when we yield to it. . . . From that day on, I used the boy occasionally; for the evil face followed me all over the country, the same face in every audience, till I came to loathe it.

"I was lecturing at Birmingham, on the Monday night, I remember, and, as soon as I began to speak, I noticed that man before me in the fifth row as usual, and I grew cold with fear. But I soon pulled myself together, and went on with my lecture. The people were very enthusiastic, and enthusiasm is catching; and, somehow or other, I was filled with the sense of victory. And when at the end I told the ball to come to me, and it came, and to go away from me, and it went, I was quite confident and happy; and I put my hand on the ball and said: 'I think if I told it to spin round, it would spin with the motion of the earth on its axis,' and, as I spoke, the ball began to spin; and, when I looked out over the audience in triumph, I noticed the man with the evil face had got up in his place to watch the ball. In half a minute, he sat down again with a grin, as if he had solved the riddle: the poor fool.

"The next afternoon, my boy—he was a nice little fellow—came to me, and asked me for the evening off; his mother, it appeared, lived at Edgbaston, and he wanted to go and see her. But I said:

"No, Walter; I am not quite well, and I should be nervous without you.'

"He looked at me a little sullenly, I thought, as he replied:

"You don't need me, professor; you know the ball goes just as well without me: it always starts before I even put my weight on the lever."

"But I cried:

"No, no, Walter; the excitement of last night has tired me. I cannot let you go. Without you I should be afraid.'

"So I opened my second lecture at Birmingham with the boy in the sphere. The hall was crowded, and the people more enthusiastic than ever; but when, at the end of my lecture, I called the ball to me, it would scarcely move, and when I sent it away it responded very feebly, and I trembled, fearing that Walter was disobedient. In the

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

audience there were murmurs of discontent. Suddenly, the man with the evil face rose and said:

“‘Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve followed these lectures for weeks. That man on the platform is an impostor. I can prove it; his trick is a swindle and a cheat.’ The next moment he had come up beside me on the stage. He declared that there must be a young boy or girl in the ball to move it, and he dared me to let him examine the ball and show what he called the fact. I looked at him and said:

“‘What does the fact prove? Doesn’t the lesson remain whether the ball stands still or moves?’

“He laughed in my face.

“‘Who cares for your lesson?’ he cried; ‘the one thing we want to know is whether you can make dead metal move; you can take your teaching where you like; is there anyone inside that ball or not? That’s what we want to know?’

“A good idea came to me in my extremity, and I said: ‘You are absurd. How could a person inside the ball make it spin?’

“And he replied: ‘I don’t know, but I’ll soon find out when I see the mechanism. If there is anyone inside the ball, you are a cheat!’

“And I answered: ‘I am not a cheat: what do I cheat you of, if there were some one inside the ball?’ but, as I spoke, all the others shouted, and he cried:

“‘Let me test the ball,’ and I said:

“‘You shall not,’ and he said:

“‘I will.’

“Even as I withstood him, I noticed that all were on his side and against me, and then hatred of them overcame me and contempt, and I said:

“‘What if there is a boy in the ball? What will you do then?’ and he shouted in triumph, turning to them:

“‘I knew it was a boy: he has confessed.’

“I can’t tell all they said and did in their rage”—Mortimer was now speaking feebly, as if exhausted—“but, at last, they gave me a pen and ink and told me to write the admission that there was a boy inside the ball and that I had cheated them, or else they would break open the ball and see for themselves.

“I was tired to death, and my soul was filled with contempt of them and loathing; and, at last, I signed the paper, admitting that I was a cheat, and they jeered at me and spat upon the ground, and crowed that Birmingham was too wise to be taken in by my tricks, and demanded their money back, and went away sneering and triumphant.

“I sat on the platform deserted and alone, shamed to the soul: my

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

life in ruins about me. . . .

“Suddenly a door at the right of the stage opened and little Walter came in. When he saw me, he hesitated:

“‘I am sorry, Professor,’ he said, hanging his head; ‘very sorry. I did so want to see my mother and I went to Edgbaston; but the ball moved didn’t it, just the same?’

“I started to my feet:

“‘You were not in the ball then, Walter?’ I cried; and he answered, looking at me in astonishment:

“‘No, Professor, I was not in the ball. I have only just come back.’”

*September, 1901*

## A FOOL’S PARADISE

*Published in the collection The Veils of Isis (1915)*

WESTBURY and Clayton had been friends since their student days. Westbury was a general practitioner, who in twenty years had brought it to Harley Street and comparative riches. Clayton, on the other hand, had been well off even as a student, and had specialized as soon as he could. After getting his degree in London he had spent five years in German *Augen-Kliniken*, and was now one of the first oculists in London, and esteemed even in Berlin and Vienna. He cared little for money and much for his craft, and as he grew older the scientific side of his work became an art to him of engrossing interest. The two men were dissimilar in looks, as in purpose and mind. John Westbury was an ordinary short, stout Englishman, with an irregular, strong face and kindly brown eyes; he liked his profession, except the getting up at night, and he worked hard because he wanted to leave his wife and children well provided for, and was energetic by nature. His chief pleasure was a night at a music-hall or a game of golf. Clayton, on the other hand, was unmarried, slight and tall, with hatchet face, thin features, and visionary gray eyes which had a sort of mesmeric attraction for some women and children. He found it impossible to make new friends, a sort of shyness having grown upon him through his absorption in his art; but he loved to motor about the country at random; and when he could get Westbury to accompany him he was delighted, for Westbury not only recalled his past youth to him, but made the present vivid with stories and scraps of practical experience.

In the August of 1908 the two friends were on a motor drive

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

through the South of England. They took it very leisurely, going hither and thither as fancy or whim directed. A week of such vagrancy had rather bored Westbury, who always wanted some purpose even in pleasure. He could not help preferring the known comforts of life to the untried distractions; he suddenly proposed that they should go to Winchester and visit the cathedral and school. He thought it would be a good opportunity to decide whether the school would suit his eldest son, of whom he was inordinately proud. Clayton assented, though a definite intention when he was pleasuring annoyed him like a straight road. They spent the night in a very prim hotel in Winchester, and in the morning went over the school and saw the wooden platters the boys ate from, and were amused to hear how the scholars arranged the mashed potatoes round their quaint plates so as to keep the gravy within bounds. After an hour or so in the old-world surroundings they got into the car again, and went out to Holy Cross and tasted the thin beer and bread given in alms to every wayfarer for some five hundred years now. Westbury wished to visit the cathedral, but Clayton proposed to drive somewhere into the country and take pot-luck for lunch. Westbury hated pot-luck; but as Clayton had yielded to him in almost everything day after day, he felt he must risk it, especially as the chauffeur assured him that he knew a place near Petersfield where one could get a very good lunch indeed. The chauffeur's promise was more than fulfilled, and after an excellent plain meal the two men mooned down the village high street that straggled about as if it, too, were without purpose in the world.

Of a sudden, just where the street broke into the open country, they came upon a knot of boys making fun of a youth who stood with his back to a gate laughing. Westbury's attention was immediately caught by the unusual spectacle. He questioned one of the urchins.

"It's only Clarence Jones," said the boy. "He's not right, sir; he's funny, and he do say funny things; he talks and laughs to himself, and that makes we laugh."

"You oughtn't to tease him," said Westbury. "Where does he live?"

"With his mother, there," replied the boy, pointing to a homely little cottage a hundred yards from the road, with a few trees about it.

"He doesn't look like an idiot," said Westbury to Clayton, who seemed to take no interest in the boy's explanation.

"No," Clayton admitted, waking up; "a well-formed head. Is he an idiot?"

"They say so," replied Westbury carelessly. "A merciful providence, isn't it, that so many idiots seem to be happy? This fellow

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

appears to be highly amused."

"Rather unusual, isn't it?" asked Clayton, looking at the idiot more intently. "There seems to be a sort of meaning in his laughter. I wonder whether he is an idiot?"

"Of course he is," Westbury decided. "No sane person would stand there to be mocked at and laugh with delight."

Clayton did not appear to be convinced, for he went over to the youth and began to talk to him, examining him the while covertly. Westbury, on the other hand, followed his bent by trying to find out from the gang of boys all about Jones.

It appeared that his mother was the widow of a gamekeeper, who had been beaten to death one night by poachers. Westbury scented a tragedy, and was eager to learn all about the case; but the urchins had not much to tell him.

Strange to say, Clayton appeared to be peculiarly interested in the idiot.

"A most extraordinary case," he said, returning to Westbury. "I want to examine him properly. I should like to talk with his father."

"He's only got a mother," replied Westbury, "but we could go and see her. I expect she'll be delighted to see you if you think you can do anything for him. What do you make of him?"

"I want to examine him," repeated Clayton.

"There is not much to be done with him," remarked Westbury. "He's been an idiot from birth, I hear."

Just then the idiot appeared to notice Westbury for the first time, for he broke into peals of wild, hysterical laughter, bending down and rubbing his legs with his hands in uncouth gestures of delight.

"He's as mad as a March hare," exclaimed Westbury, with a certain natural irritation.

"He may be," Clayton admitted, "but let's go and see the mother."

Mrs. Jones was a thin, neatly dressed woman, whose speech was much above her position in life. She had good eyes and forehead, and the small, regular features showed traces of prettiness, but her expression was subdued and anxious. When told by Westbury that they were two doctors, and that they took an interest in her boy, "At least, my friend here, the great oculist, does," she invited them into her cottage, and at Clayton's request showed him into the little parlor in order that he might examine her son at his ease. Westbury preferred to stay with the mother in the little porch and finish his cigar.

He soon heard her whole story. Her husband, a great, strong man, head gamekeeper to the lord of the manor, had been brought home eighteen years before with his head battered in.



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"There must have been three or four at him," she declared proudly. "He died in that room in the morning just as the nurse came; I was only half conscious—silly-like. When I saw them carry him in with his poor head all blood I seemed to turn cold inside. I went all dazed. I was expecting my baby, sir, and was not very strong. . . . I suppose I was out of my head, for when I got to notice things he had been buried two days"—she wiped her eyes and sniffed—"and I was all alone with my daughter and the baby. . . ."

"The old squire has been very good to me. He has allowed me ten shillin' a week ever since, and this house rent-free. Oh! he's been very kind always; and my daughter married a draper at Alton, and is very well off. She and her husband Mr. 'Arding, a very superior man, a gentleman, as you might say, often drive across of a Sunday to see me. It's his own trap, kept private. . . . I'm quite comfortable, though it's lonesome here. You see, I was lady's-maid in London before my marriage, and this cottage seems very lonely-like. . . . I'm always grieving about Clarence; he was such a dear big baby. He never cried in his life; but just when he ought to have begun learning his letters and noticing things, he took to this laughin'. . . . If your friend could cure him we'd all be thankful, I'm sure, though Clarence is not so silly as you'd think . . . he is wonderful sensible sometimes . . . and he always does what I tell him. . . ."

Westbury comforted her as best he could, and talked of other things, wondering in himself the while what on earth Clayton could find in the idiot to keep him so long.

Suddenly the door of the parlor opened, and Clayton beckoned to them. Westbury preceded the widow into the little room. The idiot again burst into his hideous cachinnation at the sight of Westbury, doubling himself up with laughter. The mother walked over to him and stroked his head, saying:

"You must not laugh at the gentleman, Clarence; it's rude to laugh."

Clarence evidently understood, and tried to obey. He stood with twisted face, giggling, trying his best to control himself.

"A most remarkable case, Mrs. Jones," said Clayton. "I don't know yet, but I'm inclined to think I can cure your son and make him like other boys."

The mother's face flushed, and she put up her hand as if to ward off the shock. "Really, sir?" was all she could say.

"I'm not sure, you know," Clayton went on. "I don't want to lift your hopes too high, but the boy seems to me sensible enough were it not for this laughing."

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"That's it, that's it, sir!" cried the mother, stretching out both her hands. "He's sensible underneath, is Clarence, and as good as gold. He's never any trouble at all, and he understands any questions I ask him: don't you, Clarence, dear?"

The boy looked at her and began to laugh quietly, as if amused by the question.

"I shall have to see him in London," Clayton explained, "and make a close examination. I must get a strong light on his eyes. Can you bring him or send him up to me?"

The woman hesitated.

"If I decide that an operation is necessary I would not charge you anything for it; but I should have to keep the boy for a couple of months to insure a proper recovery."

"It's very good of you, I'm sure," said Mrs. Jones, "and I'll tell my daughter what you say. Do you think you can make him all right, sir?" Her doubting eagerness was pathetic.

"I'm inclined to think so," repeated Clayton. "Here's my card, and if you decide to let me have a try, I'll do my best."

"Thank you, sir," she said. "I'll tell all you say to my daughter and her husband, and let you know."

\* \* \*

As they walked toward the inn Westbury questioned Clayton.

"What bee's got in your bonnet, Dave?" he cried. "Nothing on earth could do that idiot any good unless you could put new brains into his head. What do you mean by talking of an examination?"

"It's a very peculiar case," replied Clayton, as if to himself, his eyes turned inward in thought, "a most interesting case"; and then, waking up, "I'll let you know about it, if they send him to me."

"The only interesting thing I can see in the matter," rejoined Westbury, "is the fact that the shock of seeing her husband murdered made the poor woman give birth to an idiot, and an idiot who laughs at everything. Murderous cruelty producing idiot laughter—it's a mad world. . . ."

\* \* \*

Some few months later Westbury called one afternoon on Clayton, and spent the evening with him in his study overlooking Regent's Park. They had been talking a few minutes, when Westbury exclaimed:

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"By the way, I hear you have had Clarence Jones up here and worked a miracle on him."

"The operation was successful," Clayton admitted.

"What was the matter with him, really? You were very mysterious about it."

"Not mysterious," replied Clayton, "only doubtful. I could not see his eyes properly at first, but when I had him here and examined him closely it was all pretty plain sailing."

"What was wrong with him?" cried Westbury. "Did it explain that continual laughing of his?"

"It explained everything," replied Clayton. "His eyes were abnormal. You wouldn't meet another pair like them in a lifetime. . . . There were little growths in the pupils, so that each eye had half a dozen facets, so to speak. The boy saw every separate object in half a dozen different aspects, just as if he were looking into those concave and convex mirrors you have in fairs. Nearly every object therefore was amusing to him, though some things, of course, appeared elongated and lugubrious. . . . I had to remove all the little growths one by one—rather ticklish work—and give the pupil time to knit and heal, and the eye was perfect."

"My God!" cried Westbury, "what a magician's wand that scalpel of yours is; with it you turn an idiot into an ordinary boy—and an unpleasant idiot at that," he added, a little malevolently. "His mother, I suppose, is enchanted?"

"She writes very nicely to me about it. She was altogether a superior woman, you remember. . . . I have her letter somewhere," and he turned over some papers on his desk.

"I suppose you'll be going down to see them?" remarked Westbury. "There's no pleasure like the pleasure we have in a really wonderful cure."

"I'll run down some time in the summer probably," Clayton rejoined; "but there is nothing to go for immediately. The boy's eyes when I sent him home were perfectly normal and strong. . . ."

\* \* \*

In the early spring Clayton was surprised and not a little annoyed by a letter he received from Mrs. Jones. She asked him to come down and see Clarence as soon as he could. The boy was "out of sorts," she said, and caused her great anxiety.

"Out of sorts—" Clayton could not understand it. But as he practiced chiefly for his own pleasure and had been really interested in

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

the operation on the boy's eyes, he took an early opportunity of motoring to the village.

Mrs. Jones met him at the garden gate.

"I got your telegram, sir, saying you were coming," she exclaimed hurriedly. "He's inside, but I must tell you about him first. He's not happy, sir; he's very depressed and disappointed and angry—"

"Angry," repeated Clayton; "but not with me, I hope?" he asked, smiling.

"With every one," repeated Mrs. Jones, "I'm sorry to say, and with you, too, sir, very angry. You'll be gentle with him, won't you, sir?"

"Of course, of course," replied Clayton, his mind trying to grasp the new situation; "of course I shall be gentle. Everything's new to him, I suppose, and strange?"

"That's it, sir; and he thinks everything's your fault."

"I'm very sorry. Let me see him at once," said Clayton, really astonished. "I'll do my best, you know."

In another minute the doctor and patient were face to face. The youth stood in the corner of the room near the fireplace with averted face glowering.

"What is it, Clarence?" asked Clayton pleasantly, going toward him. "I hear you're unhappy."

The youth looked at him without a word, his face set with rage; and now that his eyes were normal one could see that it was a fine face, well-shaped and well-featured; but the merry look had gone, and in its place was scowling hate.

"What's the matter?" repeated Clayton, a little shocked by the youth's manifest rage and dislike.

"Matter," repeated the young man slowly. "I suppose I ought to be grateful to you, oughtn't I?" he sneered.

"I should think so," replied Clayton, a little nettled, "though I don't expect gratitude. I did my best for you, and got nothing out of it."

"Did I ask you to do anything for me?" cried the boy. "Who asked you to interfere?"

"Any one would do a kind act without being asked," Clayton answered gravely.

"A kind act?" cried the young man, seizing the table with both hands and thrusting his hot face forward. "A kind act, you call it?"

"Certainly," retorted Clayton; "a kind act to turn a laughing idiot into an ordinary youth. I should think so, indeed."

"Ordinary be damned!" cried the youth; "ordinary! Till you came

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

I was happy, happy as a king. I was more than contented. Everything I saw was wonderful to me. Even the boys who laughed at me and mocked me were comic creatures who amused me. There they were, the grinning faces, dozens of 'em—all different, too funny for anything. I was amused from morning till night. My mother took care of me; I lacked nothing; all my life was a dream of pleasure. . . .

"Then you came where you were not wanted, and with your damned cleverness robbed me of all the joy and wonder, turned me from a king with all the world for my fools into a dull, ordinary creature.

"Not ordinary even," he went on wildly, as if the word excited him, "but behind everybody else, more stupid. I cannot even go to school. I don't know anything. Every one pities and despises me now. Here I sit all day long trying to learn to read and to make pothooks. The devil could not have done worse to me than you've done, you—" and the young man threw himself into a chair and leaned his burning face on his hands.

"Come, come," said Clayton gently, going over to him, genuinely affected by his misery. "Come, come, Clarence, all this will pass. You will soon overtake the other boys, and as soon as you learn to read easily you will have books and all the wisest men as your companions. You will soon see that you are better off."

"Do you think I haven't told myself that?" cried the youth, looking up with streaming eyes. "But it is not true; the charm and wonder of the world have gone from me forever. I shall never see the comic faces again; never again notice the thousand different shades of expression, never again. How could you? How could you? . . . Oh, my God! how miserable I am!"

Clayton drew up a chair; he was interested, in spite of himself, by the bitterness of the youth's grief. He put his arm around his shoulder.

"In a little while, Clarence, you will be able to study all sorts of expressions not only in the living people about you, but in books. You will come to know all the great men and women who have lived before you.

"I have taken away from you an unreal world; but you have got the real world instead, and it is an infinitely richer world than the one you have lost, for it holds all the past as well as the present. Think of that." He spoke with infinite gentleness; but the youth would not be comforted. He looked up at him with his face all shaken.

"You don't know, you don't know!" he cried. "I was happy, happy as a god in my own paradise, and now I am outcast and miserable—

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

less than nothing. Girls came to me and wanted to know why I laughed at them, what I saw in their faces; and I saw such wonderful things. Now nothing—every face is always the same; men and women—like the faces of sheep or cows—nothing in them. Oh! it is a dreadful world—common and ugly and always the same. I hate it, hate it all. . . . You robbed me of paradise, thrust me out into this beastly ugly world; and I had never done you any harm—never, never. . . .”

He wept with such passion that Clayton began to fear that he would make himself ill. After trying in vain to cheer him with some commonplace consolation, he left the room.

Mrs. Jones met him with questioning, anxious eyes: he nodded his head gravely.

“It’s worse than I thought, Mrs. Jones. I want to go and think it all over. A man may do great harm with the best intentions; but I think it will be all right in time. He’s an astonishing youth; in time he’ll get accustomed to the change and find compensations.”

“That’s the worst of it, sir,” cried the mother. “At first he set to work and was not unhappy; he worked very hard at his reading and writing. Clarence has a great deal of sense,” she added; “he often surprises me by what he says. But as time went on he seemed to find it harder and harder. . . .”

“He began to read the Bible, sir. I thought ’twould do him good, and ever since he has talked about being driven out of paradise and a devil with a flaming sword. Sometimes I’m really afraid for his reason. You don’t think he’ll go mad, do you, sir?”

“No, no!” cried Clayton; “put that fear out of your head; his mind’s all right, and if we can get his hope and ambition roused, you’ll be proud of him yet. I’m very much interested in him.”

She nodded her head feebly, doubtfully.

“Thank you, sir. I had better go to him now. After one of these fits he always has a bad headache. . . .”

Clayton went to the inn puzzled and annoyed. Reflection showed him no new argument, and when he returned to the house after lunch the mother told him that Clarence had gone to bed worn out, and was sleeping, she thought. At any rate, she was sure it would be better not to disturb him. Clayton returned to London, promising he would write.

During the next few days he thought a good deal about the matter, and at length came to a decision and wrote his patient a long letter. Before sending it he went round to Westbury, in whose common sense he had a great deal of confidence. He told Westbury what had happened, and asked him what he thought of the youth and his

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

paradise.

Westbury shrugged his shoulders.

"An ungrateful hound. If I were you I'd pay no more attention to him. That's the sort of thanks you get in life when you do good to people. . . . I've had dozens of similar experiences. I never look for gratitude now, and never meet it. Men are ungrateful by nature, and women spiteful to boot. Why should you bother yourself? You did everything for the best."

"Yes, I know," replied Clayton dubiously, "and it was my best. Yet the doubt torments me. The boy's eyes smarted after the operation, and I gave him cocaine to dull the pain. Surely it's my duty to diminish the discomforts of life to him now. I've written him a letter, and I want you to hear what I've said. I must encourage him, you know. . . . I'll not trouble you with the whole screed—just the gist of it. I begin by telling him that his experience is not singular, though it's uncommon. "Every artist, every great man, begins life like an ordinary boy, and so long as he is commonplace he is happy; but when, bit by bit, he grows above other men, he begins to see men and women as Clarence used to see them, in all sorts of comic lights and tragic lights as well, and the pageant of life becomes infinitely interesting to him.

"But all his fellows resent his superiority and do their best to pay him out for it; they jeer at him and insult him; they hate him, in fact, and if they get a chance they punish him dreadfully.

"All great men, artists and thinkers alike, are agreed that genius is a long martyrdom, that happiness is only to be found in ordinary conditions and ordinary life.

"Success and praise and pleasure are all got by being commonplace, by being exactly like the ordinary run of mankind, one of the many. . . ."

"You see," Clayton broke off, "I insist on all this to give him ambition and hope, to hearten him; then I go on:

"But if, indeed, your earlier experiences were so delightful that you can do nothing but pine for them and desire them, you may win them all back again. All you have to do is to set yourself to learn and to grow so as to become wiser and gentler and more loving than your fellows, and you will then see the faces of men and women once again in a hundred different facets, and they will all move you to laughter or to tears. . . . But men and women will hate you for your superiority and punish you for it; you will be thrust out of the paradise of ordinary life, and be made an outcast and a pariah . . . the Vision Splendid has to be paid for, and the price is heavy."

AN ENGLISH SAINT

*Published in the Collection Unpath'd Waters (1913)*

MR. LAWRENCE had brought tailoring to an art: he had reconciled contradictions; his clothes fitted the individual, yet preserved a distinctive class-fashion and dignity. His own manners were of similar elegance: he met everyone politely from whom he had anything to gain, and yet by subtle gradations of deference proclaimed differences of position. In excellent harmony with his surroundings, he had made money easily and saved a considerable sum; he had no vices so-called, save vanity, and had placed all his hopes in his only son Gerald. He had got Gerald into Harrow, had hoped for years to make an officer of him; the boy's handsome face and figure he thought would be best set off by gold-laced uniform and a mess jacket. But a certain delicacy of constitution, which appeared to have grown with the lad's growth, defeated his hope, and nothing was left for Gerald, in his father's opinion, but the Church; to be a gentleman was the goal of Mr. Lawrence's ambition. He was ashamed of the shop—"a cut above it" he felt—and would have sought another career for himself had he had the necessary education. He was determined that his son should enjoy all possible advantages of teaching and training.

At first Gerald did not seem to profit by his opportunities. He learned with difficulty, his memory was weak, and his mind flaccid. His father consoled himself with the fact that the boy was growing too fast. "There's no hurry for a year or two," he used to say to himself. So he kept his son at home in his large villa on Putney Hill, and fed him up as a preparation for Oxford. The youth took all that was done for him as a matter of course. He was content to go to Oxford, which seemed to him more aristocratic than Cambridge. He had been taught by bitter experience at the preparatory school that the shop in Bond Street was something to be put behind one and forgotten; and at Harrow his pallor and frailty, something wistful and unearthly in his large eyes, had won sympathy and blunted the malice of boyish curiosity. Gerald had inherited his father's qualities of docility and good humour; but his father's tough resolution to get rich and get on was transmuted in him into a desire to please rather than to rise. His extraordinary beauty made this ambition appear amiable. Gerald was tall and slight, and his face had the refined regularity of an ascetic



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Hermes. His father, while proud of his own good features and silver hair, had always regretted a tendency to stoutness and high colour, and his boy's slim figure and pallor appealed to him intensely. "It gives him an air," he said to himself.

Gerald had a good deal of difficulty in getting into Lincoln. His father preferred that college to any other: the name had a stately quietude about it which pleased him, and everybody knew that the Master was a famous scholar, whose mere approval conferred dignity. But though the entrance examination is not supposed to be difficult, it proved almost insurmountable to Gerald. Still, thanks to the clever coaching of an eminent, but poor, scholar, who consented to stay at Putney with them for six months, the difficulty was at length overcome, and Gerald entered Lincoln.

The rooms allotted to him there had formerly been inhabited by a sporting nobleman whose tastes wavered between the photos of Gaiety chorus girls and coloured prints of renowned pugilists. Gerald had to take over the furniture, and, with his usual acquiescence, he occupied the rooms without disturbing either the rosy biceps of Tom Belcher and Jim Mace or the black legs of the reigning beauties.

Gerald settled down in Oxford easily and quickly. He rather liked rules, and kept them without difficulty; he was never late even for morning chapel. His distinguished appearance and ingratiating manners won him numbers of acquaintances; everyone wanted to know him, and before his first term was at an end he was friendly with nine men out of ten in the college, and on good terms with half the 'Varsity. Yet there were a few bitter drops in his cup. Young Lord Woodstock had shown himself very friendly for a little while and then drawn away coldly. Luke Rattison, too, the Master, had made much of him at first; asked him to lunch and dinner and then left him severely alone.

"An amiable idiot" was the bitter-tongued judge's harsh verdict. On the whole, Gerald's first term at Lincoln was rather a success in spite of Lord Woodstock's defection and the Master's disdain.

When he returned home his father was delighted with him; told him he had let it be known in business circles that he wanted to sell the shop, adding that when he got the price he wanted for it the boy should have the income of a Bishop to spend as he liked. Gerald was suitably grateful, though he scarcely realised the abyss that lies between poverty and riches. He had always had what he wanted, and his desires had never been sharpened by denial.

Watching him closely his father noticed that his son had taken a liking to fancy waistcoats and coloured ties; he wondered if the boy had fallen in love; and, to tell the truth, there was a barmaid at a village

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

inn on the river above Oxford who had half captivated the youth's fancy. But luckily, or unluckily, Gerald was destined to fall into more skilful hands. Early in his second term he met some one who stopped his drifting and brought him to new bearings. He had been walking along the towing-path, watching the boats on the river, when he was hailed by Lord Woodstock. He went across to him eagerly (Gerald seldom bore malice), and was presented to a Mrs. Leighton.

"I want you to take Mrs. Leighton home," said Lord Woodstock. "It's going to rain, I'm sure, and you've an umbrella. I am due to go out in the 'night.'"

Gerald Lawrence bowed, accepting the trust. He had a sort of vision of a lady about middle height, with steady brown eyes, and a smile that caught his breath. Mrs. Leighton lived about half-a-mile on the other side of Oxford, and on their way through the High he realised that she seemed to know a good deal about him, though he did not understand that most of her conversation was directed to the increasing of her knowledge. The truth is Mrs. Leighton had been struck with the extraordinary beauty of his face, and had managed to get Lord Woodstock to introduce her without arousing that sharp young gentleman's suspicions.

Mrs. Leighton usually succeeded in whatever she undertook. She was a woman of thirty odd who admitted to twenty-seven or twenty-eight. She had been married very young to an Indian judge some twenty years her senior. He had caught dysentery and died, and had left his widow very well provided for. A house and some three acres of ground on the outskirts of Oxford formed part of his legacy to her. Mrs. Leighton had settled down at Oxford, meaning to occupy her leisure with flirtations if she could get nothing more serious. She had already had two or three little affairs; the one with Woodstock had left a smart of disappointment. She had begun to realise that the extreme youth which appealed to her so intensely had corresponding drawbacks and shortcomings. The fever of it ran high, but it was all embarrassing idealism, adoration even, and mad, unreasoning jealousy, or else it had no enduring continuance. Besides, Mrs. Leighton was intelligent and loved power even more than pleasure; she desired above everything to play a part in life. The sight of Gerald Lawrence made her catch her breath with admiration; she realised with a thrill that she had never imagined anyone so handsome or with such distinction. Struck with his expression, she had asked Lord Woodstock: "Who is the priest?" and had added something about not caring for willowy men to allay possible jealousy. But now on her way home she realised with a certain apprehension that Gerald's mere appearance

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

had moved her mind and body. The frail pallor of his face stirred her pity, and the great eyes set her throbbing. "Violet eyes," she said to herself; "who would have guessed that eyes could thrill?"

From that day on life assumed a new purpose for Gerald Lawrence. On parting Mrs. Leighton had said to him, "I hope you will come and see me soon." He replied that he'd be happy; but that was not enough for her.

"When, then?" she rejoined, laughing. "You know we women like to prepare a little; we hate to be taken unawares. Come to lunch—what day?"

Gerald hesitated; should he say to-morrow? Instead he questioned, "This week, may I?"

"Of course," she replied. "To-day is Tuesday; shall we say Friday at 1.30?"

And on the Friday he appeared. The house made an extraordinary impression on him; there seemed to him to be pictures everywhere; he had been accustomed to wealth and comfort, but not to refinement and beauty. He was astonished by the profusion of flowers and books and papers, by a sense of lettered and artistic understanding. Mrs. Leighton soon set him at ease and drew him out to talk about himself. After lunch they went into the drawing-room to take coffee, and he informed her that he thought of going into the Church. She encouraged him, and when he went on to confess how the Master and Lord Woodstock had treated him, she salved his hurt vanity and made light of the implied criticism. "The Master," she said, "is a pedantic old bear, and Woodstock was jealous of your good looks."

Gerald had never enjoyed himself so much. He went away promising to come again on the following Monday. Mrs. Leighton found words for her impression: "Innocent," she said to herself, and a little *gauche*, but—"and she thought of his eyes and fine features and white skin, "but sure to make a sensation as a curate—an unholy sensation," and she smiled comprehendingly.

In a little while the pair became familiar. Gerald used to drop in to tea and sit at Mrs. Leighton's feet. While in that position one day she flattered him outrageously, for she wanted to correct his somewhat pronounced taste for light waistcoats and gaudy ties.

"All your clothes," she said, "should be dark and quiet. You must really begin, Gerald, to see how fine your face is. If you were a woman you would have known it long ago, and tried to live up to it. A woman always lives up to her face if it is pretty. That's why pretty women are so much nicer than ugly ones. With your face a woman would be simply angelic. The Church is the very place for you."

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"I'm glad you like me," he replied, shyly taking her hand. She drew him to her a little and gave him her lips.

"You must have seen I like you, Gerald," she said.

"And I like you," he replied, vaguely aware of the challenge; "who could help liking you? It is more than liking"; but he omitted to prove his words.

Vaguely disappointed, she went on flattering him. "Through vanity to the heart" was her unconscious thought.

As they stood together one day at the door of the drawing-room, she said:

"I don't like to let you go, Gerald"; and as he bent down to her she slipped her arms round his neck.

"You never kiss me," she said in a childish whisper, pouting.

He kissed her. "You know I will if you like," he answered.

"If I like," she repeated, chilled and hurt; "don't you want to?"

"Of course I do," was the reply; but the kissing seemed rather to embarrass him.

She laughed aloud to change the current of feeling, and accompanied him to the door. But she had learned her lesson. "He's not like a young man," she said to herself, "there is no passion in him . . . he's merely decorative," she added a little bitterly. But Gerald meant much to her, and in spite of herself she took a lively and continuous interest in him. She was ambitious for him, and gave point and meaning to his vague aspirations by playing on his vanity.

"You will have a great success in the pulpit," she said to him once; "you must be a prince of the Church." The mere words flushed him with pleasure.

"I shouldn't know what to say," he objected.

"That will come," she insisted; "you must read the right books and get into the spirit of the thing"; and there and then made up her mind to advise and encourage him. He was very docile, very amenable to such silken guidance.

In subtler ways, too, she managed to mould and develop him. With a little trouble she got herself invited by the Master's wife, and chaperoned by that emphatic lady, took afternoon tea once in Gerald's rooms. The results of the visit were far-reaching. She was even more horrified by the prints of pugilists than by the photographs of the actresses. She soon induced Gerald to get rid of them all, to pack them all away with the fancy waistcoats and flaming ties.

Before long she had persuaded him to buy a French *prie-dieu* of the fourteenth century and a Byzantine crucifix of the sixth with an angular figure on it in ivory of an astonishingly emaciated Christ. It

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

was Mrs. Leighton who taught Gerald the aesthetic value of austerity; she stripped his rooms of ornament and even of comfort till their bareness began to affect him. All the while she was assiduous to encourage in him the vanity of his personal distinction.

"I love your honey-coloured hair," she said to him one day, "but I wish it were silver. It would suit you so much better. You will be adorable at fifty. You must let it grow longer, Gerald, not too long, but long enough to be singular. Singularity is the next best thing to beauty. . . ."

"Do you really think me good-looking?" he asked nervously, eager for more sweet.

"Good-looking," she replied gravely, "isn't the word. If you ever are as good as your looks, you'll convert the world. You have only to live up to your face, Gerald, and women will go on their knees to you."

One evening at dinner Gerald had rather a trying time which gave her a great opportunity. Luke Rattison was the host, and he seemed to take an unholy delight in asking Gerald questions and forcing him to display his mental poverty. Again and again Gerald fell into the trap; again and again Mrs. Leighton sailed in to the rescue gallantly; she was thankful when dinner was over, though she held her own to the end.

"To be as clever as you," she said to her host when rising, "is really a sort of disease"; and to Mrs. Rattison, in the drawing-room, she remarked: "All high art consists in concealing art, they say; I suppose learning's different." Mis. Leighton believed in revenging herself on her enemy.

But afterwards she took Gerald seriously to task.

"Why talk?" she said. "Why let yourself be made a fool of?"

"What was I to do?" asked Gerald. "I had to try to answer his stupid questions."

"No, no, you hadn't," she said quickly. "Why not have smiled at him in an abstracted kind of way and refused to be drawn out? The less you say the better," she added out of her disappointment. "No one can know what's in you if you don't talk. It's a great deal easier to look wise than to talk wisely. Besides, my dear Gerald, it is your rôle to say nothing. When you have beauty to speak for you, why talk? Silence alone is magnetic."

The dinner had frightened her thoroughly and she set herself at once to strengthen her protégé's weak points. She read the Gospels with him, and made him learn some of the great phrases by heart, and begged him to use them in and out of season.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"You have no idea how effective they are," she said; "they never seem out of place in a man who is going to be a clergyman, and they always call up childish associations in all of us and high emotions. We all thrill to them. . . ."

"How clever you are, Amy," he sighed. "If only I had half your brains!"

She pouted and shrugged her shoulders; she was beginning to think that less than half would profit him, but out of loyalty to her affection she put the thought away.

All this while Gerald was not merely passive. Very early in their acquaintance he realised that Mrs. Leighton's advice was excellent. He noticed that since he had taken to dress as she wished, everyone showed greater eagerness to know him, everyone made up to him. A little while after his rooms were swept and garnished, a senior student of Christ Church, who had visited him, declared that there was no man in the college so interesting, no rooms so characteristic. A little later, too, Gerald conquered the flippant unconcern of Lord Woodstock, who came up to his rooms by chance and was astonished beyond measure at the change in them. He fell in love with the Welsh dresser and the old oak refectory table; but the *prie-dieu* and the great Byzantine cross pleased him still more. Gerald explained the change cleverly. "You see, I took over Lord S——'s rooms, and I didn't like to alter them at once; it would have looked—" and he stopped.

"Some of the fellows call you the 'Saint,'" Woodstock exclaimed, "and I half-believe you deserve it. You don't go on the river now, do you?"

"No," said Gerald, recalling at once Mrs. Leighton's advice, and adding in an undertone as if to himself something about "my Master's business," and then flushed with doubt of his own daring.

The quotation and flush were not lost on Lord Woodstock. He instantly became serious:

"You must not mind my chaff, old fellow. At the very first, you know, I took to you, and first thoughts are always best, I'm beginning to believe. You must not take my ragging seriously. I chaff a bit, but there's no harm in me, at least so the dear old mater says."

Gerald just nodded, smiling a little. He was wise enough not to say anything more, and Lord Woodstock went away genuinely impressed.

Gerald began to see that an undreamed-of success was possible to him, and his vanity was on fire to realise it. Mrs. Leighton had put a new spirit into him; set an ideal before him which he felt he might reach, and which brought him honour and satisfaction at every step.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

He began resolutely to try to model himself on her favourite St. Francis, and very soon his progress became astonishing. He had learnt to smoke, as most young men do, but he had never cared for it very much. The truth was, any little excess of any sort shook his weakness at once; an extra cigar or an hour or so spent in a smoke-laden atmosphere made him dizzy and unwell. Mrs. Leighton advised him to drop it. "Saints shouldn't smoke," she said; and he gave up the practice and felt better for it. Renunciation is a pleasure to the weak. One day at lunch, too, with Mrs. Leighton, he noticed that the coffee and liqueur had flushed his face. He asked her whether she had remarked it.

"Since you ask me, Gerald," she confessed, "I must say I have, and I don't like it in you. It does not matter much," she went on smilingly, "but you ought not to care for any worldly pleasures; you ought not to look hot and healthy. If you were robust or strong you would lose half your distinctive character. You appeal to the pity in one, and pity is the most direct approach to the heart. You should be very pale and hold yourself aloof. Your face is saintly, you must really resolve to grow worthy of it."

He was willing enough to accept the hint; he left off using coffee and liqueurs and a little later began to deny himself meat as well; his vanity ruled him, and whatever increased the spiritual beauty of his face was easy to him. Mrs. Leighton helped him dexterously: she gradually elaborated a rule of conduct, founded on abstemiousness, with the sole object of etherealising his expression, and her advice did not stop at externals.

"If people talk commonplaces to you, don't answer them," she counselled. "Take no part in worldly conversation. The heavenly world is your kingdom."

On this road they made discovery on discovery, though Mrs. Leighton was nearly always the quicker to draw the true lesson from every incident. A lady of great position had been talking to Gerald in Mrs. Leighton's drawing-room. She had been completely won, partly by his appearance, partly by the thoughtful reticence of his attitude; she was just asking him to come down to C— to dine and stay the night when he rose smiling, shook his head, and moved away.

Lady L— did not know whether to be angry or not, but when she saw that Gerald had not left her for anyone else, but was simply staring out of the window, she decided that the rebuff was due to some mistake of her own, or some unimagined greatness in him, and accordingly she made it her business to tell Mrs. Leighton how much she admired him, and to beg her to intercede so that the "Saint" might honour her with a visit.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"I'm afraid," Mrs. Leighton answered, "that Mr. Lawrence will not go, he hates visiting"; but she hastened to add, "he always says he should like to live in a desert, for the spirit has need of solitude."

The great lady was even more impressed; and afterwards Mrs. Leighton told Gerald of the astonishing success of his rudeness and what she had said in excuse.

"Never be afraid of being rude," she said. "Women know their own unworth, and admire everyone who treats them with disdain. Don't be afraid of standing aloof. It is familiarity which cheapens. You are very tall: make everyone look up to you, dear. I told her you were like a monk of the Thebaid: your spirit had need of solitude."

Gerald's success soon began to surprise even his mentor. Someone, probably Lord Woodstock, insisted on calling him the "Saint," and the name "caught on." It became the fashion for the best men to spend half-an-hour nearly every day in the "Saint's" rooms or in his company. Gerald talked less and less, but the asceticism of the rooms and the old-world furniture appealed to all the finer spirits much in the same way as his own personal distinction and reserve appealed to them. He was learning wisdom, too, and when a man once asked him his opinion on some knotty point, he answered:

"I have no opinions." The phrase met with such success that it made him think about it and set him on to find out and elaborate the hidden significance of it.

"I have no opinions," he said a little later; "I have only feelings, and to transplant feelings into words is to make them common, deprive them of colour."

His mind grew under the discipline; every step upwards widened his horizon, forced him to further thought. The books he read helped him, too, as they help weak minds. He read the Gospels over and over again, steeped himself in them, and in the "Imitation." He learned by heart hymns of Herbert, Keble and Faber. The very fact that his mind had no furniture of its own left the chambers of it empty and prepared for the Christian equipment. His weakness of constitution made meekness and gentleness very easy to him. Every assertion of what one might call his femininity of nature pleased him and delighted his friends. Once a man was a little rude to him.

"Forgive me," said Gerald, "I must have offended you unconsciously; I'm sorry." The man stammered apologies, and afterwards took pains to be deferential.

The habit of silence, too, which Gerald cultivated, and which had grown on him, brought its own reward. He began to notice very soon that what other people said and did made a much deeper impression



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

on him when he was merely listening. His own reticence enabled him to understand other people better, to comprehend them more clearly, and as they felt no self-assertion in him, their own egotism expanded in his company, and he got to know them astonishingly well. He was observant, if not far-seeing.

Every step forward in the new path brought him encouragement and honour. His sayings began to be repeated in the college. No one ever knew who first attributed wisdom to him, but the attribution was successful. Young men in particular were inclined to accord both virtue and power to a man of such extraordinary personal distinction, and still more extraordinary reserve. Excusing himself once for having “sported his oak,” Gerald flowered into the phrase learned unconsciously from Mrs. Leighton, “The soul grows in solitude.” The word spread through Oxford as perfume spreads through a room. Gerald was continually profiting by the fact that he was in intimate harmony with his surroundings.

A sort of legend began to form itself about him in his own college. The Master’s wife, of course, knew many undergraduates, and the Gerald legend soon came to her ears. Her little mind had been made up about him, and for some time she did not trouble her husband with the ridiculous rumours. But when the elder fellows and students began to talk in the same way her feminine curiosity was excited, and she spoke to the Master.

“I want to invite that Gerald Lawrence to our garden-party,” she said. “You know they call him the ‘Saint’ now, and some even say he’s clever.”

“What!” exclaimed her husband, “that nullity! It’s impossible. There are many undergraduates who have microscopically small minds, but that man has no mind at all—a magnificent head and nothing in it. He forces me to believe there is truth in the German saying:

Grosse Stirn  
Wenig Gehirn

“Everyone can’t be mistaken,” replied his wife tartly, “and Lawrence has hundreds of admirers. Let’s ask him to our garden-party, but without that woman, that Mrs. Leighton—she’s a cat.”

The Master was indifferent.

“As you like,” he said, “one more or less in the garden makes no difference; but Lawrence is a round ought, and never will be anything more.”

The invitation surprised Gerald a little, and luckily for him he

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

took it to Mrs. Leighton. When she read it she clapped her hands.

"A proof of your success, Gerald," she cried, "a double-proof. She asks you and she doesn't ask me. I stuck up for you last time; she therefore revenges herself by not asking me. Yet she is compelled by your reputation to ask you. She has not done it willingly. You must refuse, but how? Can't we think of something that will whet her curiosity! Let's compose a letter together. But first of all let's have lunch: thoughts only come to me with the coffee."

"Eating drives my thoughts away," said Gerald meditatively.

After lunch Mrs. Leighton rose to the occasion:

"Dear Mrs. Rattison," she began, "I dare not accept your kind invitation" ("the truth," she said to herself as she wrote, "the truth's always original"). "Now how can I tell her the faults of her own house?" she mused, and scrawled two or three lines hastily, then ran her pen through what she had written. "No; that won't do," she said, "won't do at all. It's rude and not witty. Ah! I've got it. I'll blot all that out. This is the letter, Gerald." And she read aloud:

"DEAR MRS. RATTISON,—I dare not accept your invitation. Your garden is charming; but I'm a little frightened of gardeners. They divide all creation into flowers and weeds, and I'm only a weed. You will forgive me, won't you? and let me come and drink tea with you some afternoon?"

"Yours in all service,

"GERALD LAWRENCE."

"That last sentence is a masterpiece," cried Mrs. Leighton, "for it divides them and gets the woman on your side. She'll begin to admit her husband's faults and take your side against him, and that new ending's good. It's only a woman who could write like that," and she sighed.

"I think it very clever of you, Amy," said Gerald while stooping over her to sign. As he drew himself up again he put his left hand on her shoulder, and, being pleased with her success and his praise, she looked up at him. The invitation in her regard affected him: he bent and kissed her forehead. She drew his lips down to hers. When he stood up again she felt he was a little rigid and aloof.

"He has no passion in him," she said to herself afterwards, "not a spark, yet he tempts one. Why?"

She consoled herself very easily. It was a distinction now to be seen with Gerald Lawrence. Everyone stared at them when they passed in the street. She could read envy in the sneers of the older women, and admiration in the girls' eyes. Everyone remarked him. "It's like going about with a great personage," she said to herself.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Moreover, his beauty always kept its fascination for her. "They say beauty's only skin deep," she used to say, "but ugliness goes to the bone."

Gerald's letter had a success. Mrs. Rattison brought it to the Master, who pursed his lips over it.

"H'm, h'm! rather rude."

"It's very clever," said Mrs. Rattison. "I wonder if he wrote it himself or whether that cat helped him." She determined to leave the letter unanswered.

But the rising tide of Gerald's reputation forced her hand. Mrs. Rattison resolved not to fail again; she wrote inviting Gerald to dinner, and giving him a couple of weeks' notice; she assured him, with a touch of irony, that he should be treated like a flower. At the same time she wrote to Mrs. Leighton asking her as well.

This move brought about a long talk between the two confederates.

"If you feel strong enough," said Mrs. Leighton, "we'll accept, but this time you must make no mistake. If the Master tries to draw you out, profess ignorance; if he dares to poke fun at you, smile at him kindly and don't answer him: forgive him—that's it!" she exclaimed, "forgive him, and so bring him into *your* domain; don't go into his on any account."

The words came from her heart, and Gerald at once felt their force and had a presentiment of their efficacy. He knew that he had grown wiser since he had last dined at Mrs. Rattison's and he determined now to bring the Master into his domain if possible.

The dinner was a memorable one, epoch-making indeed in Gerald's spiritual life. One or two of the fellows were very deferential to him, and tried to draw him out. Mrs. Rattison spoke of him as the "Saint" to his face; he only smiled, shaking his head in gentle deprecation.

This by-play passed unnoticed by the Master. He talked on in his usual way, picking up one topic after another, and making each in turn his own, with a certain robust commonsense buttressed by an extraordinary reading. Gerald scarcely spoke at all, and because the Master talked too much, Gerald became a sort of second centre of gravity, radiating a higher influence.

Towards the end of the dinner the Master got on one of his favourite topics, the Roman Church and its influence.

"Its discipline and elaborate hierarchy," he said, "afford proof positive of the furious opposition which the Christian doctrine encountered. The Church has the organisation of an army; it's an

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

instrument forged in ten thousand conflicts, a tremendous weapon: the Pope is merely general-in-chief."

At the first pause in the little lecture, one of the fellows who had heard a great deal of such talk turned to Gerald:

"What do you think, Lawrence, do you agree with the Master?"

"I know nothing about it," said Gerald, "but I listen with delight."

"It is a plain proposition," said the Master pompously, "and incontrovertible, I think. Christianity owes its success to the militant organisation of the Roman Church; without that it must have perished."

Every face was turned to Gerald, everyone expected of him some new word, or rather everyone felt that the time had come for him to give expression to their inarticulate disagreement with the Master's shallow and pretentious dogmatism. Suddenly Gerald, thinking of St. Francis, found the word expected of him; his long habit of silence allowed him time to prepare it.

"I distrust organisations," he began, "the spirit's more than the body."

He paused. "Forgive them for they know not what they do' has not yet been organised, or there would be no prisons," he added.

The Master stared; his natural acuteness, his memory of great thoughts, just enabled him to see that what Gerald said was true, and he admitted to himself reluctantly, "A new truth."

"That view," he retorted gruffly, "is the view a saint would take. I hear they call you a 'Saint,'" he barked at Gerald not unkindly.

Gerald looked at him completely at a loss. The Master's acquiescence had confounded him, but his usual habit of mind came to his aid:

"I'm sorry," he said, "so sorry," looking full at his tormentor as he spoke. The unexpected submission was the *coup-de-grâce*; everyone felt that Gerald had won; and with a little thrill he, too, inferred from the looks of those about him that his victory was conclusive, and he improved it during the rest of the evening by his silence and deferent courtesy. As he handed Mrs. Leighton into her brougham, she exclaimed:

"Come to see me, to-morrow: you've triumphed, dear! I'm so glad, so glad!"

From that evening Gerald began to see his way clearly. Next day Mrs. Leighton confirmed him in his opinion.

"You did not merely conquer, you wiped the floor with him," she cried. "He's a great burly, commonplace person, and you towered above him. I do not know how you got the words!" she exclaimed. "But they were the very words needed, an inspiration. To forgive

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

ignorance is unthinkable to Luke Rattison. I'm glad Lord Woodstock was at the dinner. What you said had a tremendous effect on him, and he has a great influence in Oxford. Till last night he doubted you. He told me so himself once, and I could not defend you or he'd have suspected there was something between us. Now he believes in you. It's strange how everyone likes to go on their knees before someone else. We women wallow, but men are nearly as bad. Woodstock told me last night that you were the best influence in the University. The thing he liked Oxford best for was that he had met you."

"You think he's important?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed," she replied. "He's much abler than anyone imagines. He'll come to great place and power yet, and he'll not be afraid of helping you—the really able man never is afraid to back his opinion."

A little later his fellow students began to go out of their way to show their admiration for Gerald. At first they used to send him flowers, and occasionally books. Then comparative strangers took to sending him pictures, thirteenth century saints in wood from convents in France, triptychs from Italy and South Germany. The son of the British Ambassador in Russia sent him a Russian primitive of the fourteenth century, a panel picture, that might have been of the school of Cimabue. The heads of six saints were painted on a gilded background round the figure of the Saviour. Each head was cunningly differentiated by the artist who had yet naïvely put the name on one side of it, and on the other an appropriate text. The picture was a remarkable mixture of artistic power and saintly piety. The youth despatched it to Gerald with a letter hoping that he would accept it as a token of his gratitude; he would be very proud, he said, to imagine it hanging between the two windows in Gerald's sitting-room, and there Gerald placed it. But oftener the gifts were anonymous. Curiously enough, ever since the dinner, Mrs. Leighton herself had got into the habit of deferring a little to Gerald. Success impresses even the keen-sighted.

The praise and admiration which hung about Gerald did not smooth his way through the schools. He was a wretched scholar; even the childish Greek of the New Testament was difficult to him. But he was helped through by his acquaintance with the English text. The other subjects were even harder to master. The catechism, articles, and rubrics of the Church were utterly beyond him. Often he could scarcely understand them, and he was never able to recall or use them. But he had grown cleverer in the knowledge of such phrases as appealed to his temperament, and the examiners were not so pedantic or so oblivious of public opinion as to plough the "Saint" for

ignorance of the letter: Gerald scraped through with a "pass" degree.

Long before the end of his time at Oxford he was asked to read lessons in this or that church, and these readings increased his reputation enormously. With his vanity went a good deal of the actor's temperament, and this induced him to seek singularity at all costs. As soon as he began to read in public he found that his voice was weak and almost toneless; he determined at once to make a merit of his failing, a distinction of his defect. Other people talked, or spoke, or ranted in the pulpit; he alone used a slow, unaccented, monotonous delivery which seemed to lend each word peculiar significance. Perhaps in any other man this custom would have palled; but there was about Gerald the magic of personality, and his pale face, lighted up by the great eyes, was so singularly beautiful that it seemed of itself to add weight and interest to the simplest words. One thing was certain—no one could deny the originality of his method of reading, or mistake his effects for those of any other man.

All Gerald's shortcomings of mind, no less than his gifts, including even his nickname the "Saint," seemed to lead him back to the old Catholic church. He loved, as we have said, all observances and rules like a woman loves corsets, and perhaps for similar reasons; he felt grateful for their support, and was profoundly influenced by their decorative value. Almost insensibly he began to refer everything to the Early Church and early Christian practice.

St. Francis d'Assisi, as we have seen, was his special pattern, and the three vows of the saint were often in his mind. Curiously enough the first custom he took up of the mediaeval Church had an enduring effect on his life. Inspired by Mrs. Leighton with the necessity of keeping his distinctive pallor, he had begun to practise partial fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays; he soon found that such abstinence not only increased the spirituality of his expression, but also quickened his intellect in the most unexpected way. While the body was empty he seemed to understand more clearly everything he read. His thoughts, indeed, ran quicker than the text. After an hour or so, it is true, he felt tired, and his mind began to dance about and beat time instead of moving forward. But at first, while fresh, he was conscious of a peculiar lucidity and ease of mental vision. The fact so encouraged him that he gradually changed from partial fasting to a complete fast, and contented himself on such days with an occasional cup of tea. The consequences were important. His face grew even more refined and impressive; his skin became almost transparent. The features sharpened, the eyes seemed larger as the face grew thinner. There could be no doubt that the spirituality of his appearance was

intensified. His intellect, too, expanded rapidly; his reading became more and more fruitful to him. The chambers of his mind were gradually being furnished in the style of the Middle Ages, and when he was moved, his speech took on the quaint simplicity and child-like directness of mediaeval teachers; he began to be impregnated with the finest perfume, so to speak, of the Christian spirit.

In all his after-life he regarded the habit of self-denial, which began by leaving off smoking and drinking, and culminated in regular and long fasting, as his initiation into the spiritual life. His first complete fast he always regarded as his "conversion," so to speak, to the Christian faith.

The habit of fasting was a blessing to him in many ways, but he gradually became conscious that it had one unexpected and peculiar drawback. He had never been troubled, as stronger youths are troubled, with sensuous desires which spring into being almost without cause, and make every waking hour a temptation and a plague, while breaking in on sleep even with the irresistible seduction of dreams. But fasting excited the animal nature in Gerald; threatened life put forth all its reproductive vigour, and at first he was completely at a loss whether to fight the new foe or yield. His training in self-denial taught him to resist, and during the day he found it easy to change the current of his thoughts or sensations by long walks. But at night he was powerless. He began to suffer from insomnia. He fought the dreams by reading and by increasing his walks in the day-time, so that the tired body might fall into dreamless slumber. The long walks and sleeplessness combined reacted on his appearance and increased his attractiveness. He grew stronger, too, as he grew thinner. It was Mrs. Leighton's idea that he should go to a fancy dress ball at a house near Oxford dressed as a Franciscan. His appearance was a sort of event. The monk's dress suited him peculiarly, set off the refined spirituality of his face, so that everyone was struck by it. From that night on Oxford counted him among its illustrations.

Shortly before he "went down" he received a letter offering him a vicarage in Surrey, with an income of £600 a year, as soon as he was ordained. He took the letter to Mrs. Leighton, and she soon discovered that the man in whose gift the advowson lay was a friend and political supporter of Lord Woodstock, who had left Oxford the term before. It was probable that he had instigated the offer. Gerald, however, told Mrs. Leighton that he had resolved to go to the East End of London for a couple of years, at least, before taking any cure of souls, and she approved of his intention. He therefore wrote thanking his would-be benefactor, and telling him of his purpose. The

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

gentleman replied that he quite understood; but would, nevertheless, keep the living open for Mr. Lawrence.

In fact, just as people sent him gifts to adorn his rooms, so his path upward in life was made plain for him; everyone seemed eager to put their cloaks down to help him over the muddy places—another proof of how intensely his peculiar gifts and graces appealed to his contemporaries.

The relations between Gerald and Mrs. Leighton during the Oxford time had become very intimate without ever going beyond the limits of platonic friendship. She made up her mind very soon that he was not passionate; and she took such an interest in his success and mental growth, and had so many motherly fears for his health, that this somewhat unnatural relation managed to subsist. So long as Lord Woodstock was at Oxford and came from time to time to see her, she was fairly content, but after he had left, and Gerald had gone to the East End, Mrs. Leighton soon found life in Oxford intolerable. The absence of Gerald had revealed to her her own loneliness in an extraordinary way. In a week solitude became a sort of disease to her. She did not know what to do with herself, and could hardly find energy enough to get up and dress or order meals, the eating of which was a plague and weariness. She missed the walks and talks with Gerald, and above all she missed the someone to think of and make plans for; her life was without a purpose. She put her house in the hands of an agent to sell, and determined that when it was sold she would move to London. The house quickly found a purchaser, and she soon discovered a house in Wilton Place, near Albert Gate, that would suit her. In a few months she transferred her belongings and her own charming personality to London, where she would be near Gerald, and where, too, Woodstock would be able to come to see her from time to time. She would be much more likely, she said to herself, to meet someone who would marry her in London than in Oxford.

She nestled down cosily in Wilton Place before the decorations were finished. She simply had to have Gerald come and see her. She had written him letters every day, and heralded her first free evening in London by a long telegram telling him to come and dine with her at eight o'clock.

They had only been parted a few short months, and yet as soon as he entered the room she was conscious of a change in him—a surprising change. She felt at once that some unknown influence had come between them. Her heart contracted violently as under a painful grasp. What had happened? Could he have fallen in love? She put the thought out of her mind. It was impossible, she decided. But he



had changed, he was more virile; the clasp of his hand was stronger, he moved more lightly. What can it be? Who can it be? she asked herself, resolved to find out.

The truth was as simple as the truth usually is. Although Gerald had learned a great deal at Oxford, when he came to London he was still hardly more than a boy. His vanity and Mrs. Leighton's teaching had given him an ideal in life; but it was London and its temptations which first discovered his individual soul. He had had success after success at Oxford, now he was brought to defeat on defeat. At first he had been stunned by London, and had immersed himself in the work and visiting of the Toynbee Settlement; but fasting and loneliness brought the sensual thoughts, thoughts which had now grown stronger and would not be subdued. When the impulses of the body threatened to conquer, he got into the habit of going to stay with his father on Putney Hill, thinking that the change might help him in the conflict. And at first it seemed to help him. But the table at Putney Hill was very generous, and his father, alarmed by his pallor and fragility, insisted on his taking wine and feeding up. The result on his hardened body accustomed to ascetic living was immediate: sensual imaginings ruled him, he began to be obsessed by them; in vain he fought; the Nessus shirt clung stinging; all he could do was to betake himself to the East End again and read, visit and pray so assiduously as to leave no time for thought. In this condition temptation was irresistible.

The men at the Settlement had got up a concert, and among others the Sisters Weldon had been engaged to dance and sing. They were local celebrities, a pair of girls about twenty who had made a reputation in Hackney and the neighbourhood. They were motherless orphans, very pretty and clever, and everyone took an interest in them. Doris, the elder, was perhaps the prettier of the two according to the conventional standard, but Chrissie was a finer performer and a more self-willed and stronger nature. When they came out and danced before him in their short skirts, Gerald, who was on the platform and could have touched them, felt as if he must choke. The elder girl he thought pretty, very pretty even; but the younger, the dark sister, as he called her to himself, took possession of him body and soul. She danced, he saw, with infinitely more expression than her sister, and her figure was more attractive. He could not help studying it as she swayed and curtsied before him. When they stopped, and the storm of clapping subsided, Gerald turned to his neighbour with a question, but found he could not speak without betraying his emotion; his mouth was parched as with fever. He looked down and studied his card, and when he found that the sisters were to appear again

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

he drew a long breath of relief.

He never knew what happened till they came on again and passed him going down to the footlights. This time they were both dressed like soldiers, something like Hungarian hussars, in close-fitting, dark-blue breeches, high boots and spurs, and short scarlet jackets which set off the shapely roundness of the younger girl's hips. Gerald felt his face flushing in spite of himself. He was a little annoyed and frightened lest others seeing her should fall in love with her, for he could not help admiring her mutinous dark face, her gay vivacity, her lovely form. Her sister merely danced, but brave little Chrissie threw abandon into her steps and a hint of passion; every movement of her body to him was provocative. To save his life he could not help absorbing and studying every contour of the swaying figure. It was the first time he had ever noticed the subtle, hesitating line of a woman's torso, and he gave himself up to the enchantment.

This dance of the Weldons closed the programme for the evening. With the other men of the Settlement Gerald passed behind the scenes and was introduced to the artists in order to congratulate and thank them. As the sisters prepared to go the courage of despair came to Gerald, and he told the elder sister he should like to call on them. She noticed that while he spoke he looked at Chrissie, but she was flattered by the attention and asked him to come the next day, and so the fateful acquaintance began.

They lived, he found, in a couple of rooms in Mare Street, Hackney; the thoroughfare was noisy and vulgar, relentless in its sordid squalor. The sitting-room shocked Gerald; it all seemed common, ugly, he said to himself, but Chrissie shone in the mean room like a diamond shines on black paper. She treated him as he had never been treated before, with perfect frankness. Evidently she had neither admiration for him nor fear of him. When he refused the cake and bread and butter she took an extra mouthful of cake herself and said:

"You don't know what you're missing," and laughed saucily. The careless word seemed to Gerald extraordinarily significant.

"Perhaps I don't know what I'm missing," he said; "I'll take some cake, if you please," and he did.

His desire to please made him tactful; he talked about their dancing. The elder sister, Doris, admitted that they were trying to get an engagement at the Palace Theatre. Chrissie declared, with her mouth full, that she was going to-morrow to see old Norton, and that it would be hard lines if he did not engage them!

"Hard lines, indeed!" thought Gerald, with a pang of fear for the rivalry of unseen competitors.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

All this while he was wondering how he could get to know the sisters better, become intimate with them as he had become intimate with Mrs. Leighton. He could have touched Mrs. Leighton, he felt, if he had wanted to; but he had never wanted to. Now every movement of Chrissie Weldon made him want to put his hands on her. After they had finished tea she sat in a chair opposite him and crossed her legs; the blood began to beat in his temples. A thought came to him:

“How are you going to the Palace?” he asked.

“On these, of course,” she replied, thrusting forward her little feet. “Shanks’s mare, eh, Doris?”

“Suppose I get a carriage and drive you there, and afterwards take you round the park?”

“Oh, glory, glory,” cried Chrissie, springing to her feet, “a landau with two horses, eh? Fancy, Doris, we’ll be going like queens,” and she seized her sister and danced her round and round.

Suddenly she stopped, pouting. “I forgot; I’ve only my old hat, and it’s shabby, shabby!”

“Why not buy a new one?” suggested clever Gerald.

She looked at him eagerly. He pleased her, and had begun to interest her. But the elder sister broke in at once:

“We don’t accept presents from gentlemen,” she said primly, “although we think it very kind of you, Mr. Lawrence, all the same, and we’ll accept your offer of the carriage with pleasure.”

He felt depressed, wondered vaguely where middle-class morality began and where it ended. But nothing could subdue Chrissie’s high spirits for long. The thought of the carriage intoxicated her, and again she flung her arms round her sister and whirled her round the room, singing:

“A carriage and pair in London town, in London town, in London town.  
Only to earn an honest brown, an honest brown, an honest brown,”

while laughing over her shoulder coquettishly at Gerald.

Next day they had their drive. Doris made him wait with the carriage at the corner of a neighbouring street, where they would not be known, and all through Hackney they drove with the carriage closed, but as soon as they got out of their own neighbourhood the carriage was thrown open and the girls gave themselves over to the rare enjoyment.

At the Palace, too, they succeeded in getting an engagement. Chrissie’s spirits were irresistible. She came out of the theatre like a little mad thing, with flushed face and sparkling dark eyes, excited, as

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

she said, to "the limit," and away they drove through the parks like grand ladies. Towards sunset Gerald proposed dinner, and swept away all opposition, and they had dinner together in the only place he knew—the East Room of the Criterion, where, however, the appointments and service were good enough to strike the sisters dumb with admiration. Driving home they both thanked him again and again. When he put them down near Mare Street, Gerald lifted Chrissie from the carriage in his arms—an unforgettable sensation.

He dismissed the carriage hastily; he wanted to be alone with his thoughts. He seemed to walk on air. Life had taken on a new colour for him, a new significance. His heart was beating as it had never beaten before; his blood all rhythmic—she was the loveliest creature in the world, the gayest, the sweetest, the most enchanting, the most desirable. He must win her, he felt, or lose the pearl of life.

\* \* \*

After that long, first day the intimacy with Chrissie grew by leaps and bounds. Gerald could never remember the ebbing and flowing of the tide of passion that seemed to reach flood in an hour, and swept him away like a straw; but the moments of it were epochs in his life. One such moment occurred just before the first appearance of the sisters on the stage of the Palace Theatre. The manager had been taken by their dancing in soldiers' dress and had ordered them new tights of the same sort, only more striking in colour, and, of course, better made. When Gerald called one afternoon he found Chrissie alone. The girls had been trying on Chrissie's new costume; and Doris had had to run out for a few minutes to buy some tape. Chrissie talked to him through the half-open door.

"Do come in here," he pleaded; "I can't see you, and I want to."

She shook her head. "Doris wouldn't like it. You must wait."

"Please," he persisted, "do let me just see you. You are so beautiful. I'm sure the dress is perfect. Do come out."

The mischievous laughing face appeared at the half-open door. "You must wait," she repeated, as if undecided. He went to the door and pushed it nearly open.

"Come in," he begged; "Chrissie, come in," and she yielded to his desire.

The traitor dress clothed her like a skin. Again his mouth parched and his temples beat as they did the first night he watched her on the stage. As he didn't speak, she grew a little piqued:

"You don't like it?" she asked a little anxiously, turning round as

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

if to show it all to him.

The movement threw the line of her waist and the bold curve of the hips into relief: she was adorable; his hands went out of themselves; he caught her and drew her to him passionately. She turned her head over her shoulder and repeated archly:

“You don’t like it?”

His hands came up from her waist to her breast, and he bent down to her face:

“Of course, I like it,” and he kissed her red lips; “who could help liking it? Chrissie, I love you, dear! Do you care for me?”

“Now, would I let you kiss me if I didn’t?” she pouted. “You are too sweet to us. But tell me: do you like the dress?”

“It’s charming,” he said. “You do care, then, a little for me?”

She turned to him and put her arms round his neck like a child, and drew his head down and kissed him as innocently as a child kisses on the lips.

“I do like you,” she said. “You’re so kind, and I like your height and big eyes; but,” she added gravely, “you must get stronger, you know. Doris thinks you’re consumptive. You’re not, are you?”

“No, no,” he laughed. “I never was so well in my life, nor so strong.” He stooped down and put his arms round her hips, and lifted her from the ground. She crowed with delight: “Oh, oh, oh!”

“You must put me down,” she laughed delightedly. “If Doris came in she would be very cross. Quick! quick!” and she wriggled in his arms.

That fleeting instant and its poignant emotion remained with Gerald all his life. At any moment he could close his eyes and see again the mutinous gay, laughing face, the silky dark ringlets of hair, and the saucy challenging eyes, and could feel the round firmness of the limbs he was holding against him. His hands and body bore the imprint of her form; it seemed to him as if the outline had been burned into his flesh.

He let her slide down slowly, for he was loth to part from her. As soon as she touched ground she shook herself to put her clothes straight, and ran laughing from the room.

He did all he could to get her to come out again; he even threatened to come in and fetch her. She cried out in mock alarm:

“No, no; you mustn’t.”

He knew the fear was only put on, and was about to go in when Doris opened the sitting-room door.

Why was it, he wondered later, that such magic moments in life are so fleeting-transitory?

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

\* \* \*

The next incident that counted with Gerald was of a very different nature; it occurred on the first appearance of the sisters at the Palace Theatre. A week before that event Mrs. Leighton came up to London, and everything was changed for him. Mrs. Leighton, contrary to her custom, was very exigent. She pressed him to come with her to choose furniture and curtains and a dozen other things; she insisted on being introduced to his father and invited him to lunch and dine with her.

Gerald thought it strange that the two should strike up a friendship; for his father, though distinguished-looking, dropped his "h's," very often and always showed in his speech that he belonged rather to the lower than to the upper middle-class. These little failings grated on Gerald sometimes, in spite of his love for his father; but Mrs. Leighton never seemed to notice them. She managed to engross Gerald so completely, what with luncheons and dinners and visits to Putney, that he could not spend half as much time with Chrissie as he desired. This annoyed him, and he began to show a certain coldness to Mrs. Leighton.

He did not know that his little impatiences were revealing his secret to that observant lady just as clearly as if he had told her the whole truth. He did his best not to betray himself, for he felt instinctively that Mrs. Leighton would not like the sisters, and would dislike Chrissie in particular, and he cared for Chrissie so intensely that he could not bear the idea of her being criticised or looked at coldly. Accordingly he kept his love to himself, and reproached himself daily for not tearing himself free from Mrs. Leighton's importunities.

If he had only known it, no tactics could have served him better with Chrissie. He had brought an atmosphere of pleasure, and ease, and enjoyment into her life, and thrown over it the magic of love as well; but it all seemed so easy and natural to her that at first she rather underrated his devotion. But now that he stayed away for whole days, Chrissie missed him, as she complained to her sister, "at every hand's turn." She even began to fear that she might lose him altogether. She could not help dreading lest some of the ladies in the park might get him. She thought about him every hour, wondering where he was, what he was doing, why he stayed away, and when he would be back. Love's arrow's barbed, and the more it's disturbed the deeper it pierces. In a fortnight Chrissie's affection was intensified to love. Her

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

time from eleven to four was taken up by rehearsals; but the evenings when Gerald stayed, away were cruelly dull and empty. Gerald's days, too, were all filled by Mrs. Leighton, and he had continually to struggle to get free in the evening. But still the lovers met very often, and with every meeting their affection seemed to put forth fresh flowers.

By this time Mrs. Leighton knew that Gerald was in love with a singer; knew, too, that she would appear at the Palace Theatre on the Monday night. On Tuesday or Wednesday the week before, Chrissie had given Gerald a playbill in which the sisters were announced to appear. He had crumpled it up and thrust it into his pocket, but somehow or other Mrs. Leighton had got hold of it, and as soon as she saw *The Sisters Weldon*, she felt that one of them had come between her and Gerald. She took a box on the grand tier for the Monday evening. As soon as she entered the box she saw Gerald in the front row of the stalls. When the sisters came on she picked out the younger sister, Chrissie, at once. "A vulgar, common little thing," she said to herself, "light-hearted, light-footed—light in every way. What fools men are! What fools!"

She hardly looked at Gerald; yet she knew that his glasses were glued to his eyes. She knew, too, that after the theatre he would take "the little gutter-sparrow" home. She felt certain that the sisters lived somewhere in the East End. A storm of clapping broke in upon her thoughts, the sisters were being recalled again and again; they had "caught on" the very first night. Mrs. Leighton was rather glad of their success; perhaps they would need Gerald less now.

When the sisters came on again in obedience to the demands of the house, she noticed that the younger sister exchanged glances with Gerald and danced for him, "at him," she said to herself viciously. Evidently the girl had been nervous at first; but now, having gained self-possession, was dancing for the man she loved. In spite of herself Mrs. Leighton felt Chrissie's charm, her sauciness, her exquisite girlish figure, the attraction of her childish passionate appeal; but the feeling made her cold with hate and resolution.

"We shall see, my girl," she said to herself, "who will win," and she closed her opera-glasses and went home.

When the sisters' second turn was over, Gerald went round to the stage-door to wait for them. He had hired a carriage to take them home. The commissionaire told him they would be out in a few minutes. He nodded and waited, promising himself some amusement in the sights of the strange place. Suddenly he became aware that he had formidable rivals. There was a young, slim, good-looking fellow, whom he took to be an officer, who sent in two bouquets to the sisters,

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

together with a card on which he had written a request that they would have supper with him. Gerald grew white with anger at the cool assumption of the man and the airy self-confidence of his manner. But he could not help admiring the young fellow when he took out half a sovereign and gave it to the commissionaire, with the request that he should hand the bouquets to the elder sister and the note to the younger.

A few minutes later Gerald was face to face with another aspirant, a stout, over-dressed Jew of about forty, to whom the commissionaire was very polite. He wanted to know if the stage-manager was in, and when the commissionaire said he was, he laughed loudly:

"I'll go and see him, Williams," he said, "I want to know those Weldons, that's their name—isn't it? Eh? I'll just go in and see 'em.

To Gerald's rage he pushed through the stage-door as if the place belonged to him.

The moments of waiting seemed to age Gerald; in five minutes he was whirled through a thousand emotions, and had made a hundred resolutions.

"If they speak to that cad, I'll never speak to them again," he vowed to himself. The next moment he wanted to choke the "foul brute," or beat his fat face into a pulp. The soldier, too, who whistled there nonchalantly, came in for a share of Gerald's rage and contempt. He hated him as much as he loathed the vulgarian. He determined to go away and leave Chrissie to her friends. Perhaps she had already given them some encouragement; perhaps even she had already smiled on the fat man. His very soul sickened at the thought of any connection between them; she seemed to him dirtied by the man's desire. He would go away and leave them, and he turned towards the street. Just at that moment the swinging door was thrown open and the sisters came out, Chrissie first, as usual, carrying the officer's bouquet, as Gerald noticed at once. In a second the officer had come forward, and taking off his hat had begun to speak. Gerald suddenly felt that he, too, ought to have sent Chrissie a bouquet, and he was disgusted with himself for not thinking of it sooner. His anger with Chrissie had fled at the mere sight of her.

"My name's Vincent," said the officer. "I see you have my flowers, Miss Weldon. I do hope it's a sign that you and your sister will forgive the informality of the introduction and be my guests to-night at the Savoy?"

"Oh, thank you," said Chrissie prettily, "but we cannot come," and she passed straight on to Gerald.

"I saw you in front," she said to him, and in a whisper added: "I



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

danced for you, sir!"

No one could resist her; yet Gerald heard himself answer in a strange, hard voice:

"Why did you speak to him?"

He noticed that the young fellow was talking to Doris. Even Doris was smiling at him, though she, too, refused his invitation.

The next moment Gerald had the sisters in the carriage and was driving away, the officer taking off his hat in gay salute, which filled the cup of Gerald's ill-humour to the brim.

"What's the matter, dear?" cried Chrissie.

"Nothing," replied Gerald angrily; "but why did you speak to him?"

"How could I help it?" said Chrissie laughing, pleased with his manifest jealousy. "I had his flowers in my hand, and he was quite polite."

"Polite," repeated Gerald bitterly. "Did you see the old fat Jew?"

"The stage-manager introduced Mr. Graham to us," she replied proudly. "He's a stockbroker and the chief shareholder in the theatre; even Doris was polite to him, weren't you, Doris?"

"I didn't want to supper with him," replied Doris, "but I thought we had better."

Gerald felt strangled. Was this what his love had brought him, this unworthy competition, this vile rivalry? He saw, as with second sight, that the "guinea-pig," as he called him, was a more formidable competitor even than the good-looking young officer.

"Are all women venal?" he asked himself bitterly, for both the girls spoke of Graham with awed respect.

"He's very rich," said Chrissie.

"And knows everyone," echoed Doris.

"Their very souls," he thought to himself, "are servile to riches and success."

But in a few minutes the reaction came. He would give Chrissie up to none of them. Why should he? He had good looks as well as the officer, and money to spend as freely as the City man. He triumphed to himself. Why should he not win? Why should he not take them to supper? At once, without asking, he put his head out of the window and told the coachman to drive to the Savoy.

"I'm going to take you to the Savoy to supper," he said.

"You dear!" cried Chrissie, clapping his face with her hands.

"Chrissie, Chrissie," cried Doris reprovingly. "It's very kind of you, Mr. Lawrence," she added; "but we're not dressed for the Savoy."

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"Any dress will do," he said in his ignorance (the officer had said the Savoy), and overbore their opposition. But when the sisters entered the restaurant and saw the girls and ladies elegantly gowned crowding into the supper-room, both Doris and Chrissie shrank back declaring that it was impossible for them to go in; but he insisted, and carried the matter off with a high hand. When they were seated, however, he was annoyed to find that dress does make a difference to women, for both the girls were ill at ease.

"Why should you not let me give you frocks?" he said, as soon as he realised their discomfort. "Eat your supper and drink your champagne, and to-morrow you shall have two white evening gowns, and we'll come again. After all," he added, glancing round, "you're the two prettiest girls in the room."

And, indeed, the little dark dresses and unwonted hats seemed to set off the charm of the girls' youthful beauty. Many of the men as they passed out looked down at them with frank admiration. It seemed to Gerald as if the world were in a conspiracy to put him in a secondary place.

"But, after all," he said to himself, "I know Chrissie does care for me, and it will be my own fault if anyone else gets her," and he redoubled his attentions.

While driving back he managed to take Chrissie's hand in the dark; it nestled into his all the way home, and gave him renewed courage and joy. With this support he wrung from Doris a half-promise that they would accept evening dresses from him. When they got inside the house, Chrissie made some excuse to turn back in the passage and speak to him at the street door. She gave him her lips at once. "Good-night, dear," she said. "It's been a treat," and she sighed contentedly.

When alone with his thoughts and able to analyse his impressions and emotions, Gerald realised that the poetry of his love, the idyllic beauty of it, had vanished with the sense of combat. Chrissie was no longer angelic, she had become a little dancer, and he had to win her and keep her. His love had been transmuted by jealousy into passion, just as loneliness and disquieting doubts had deepened Chrissie's affection into love.

After leaving the theatre Mrs. Leighton sat down and thought the matter over. "I need help," she confessed to herself. Her instinct had been right, she felt, in getting to know Gerald's father. She could reckon on the old man now, and use him. Early next morning she drove out to Putney, and while walking in the garden confided to old Mr. Lawrence all she knew about Gerald's "unhappy entanglement."

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

She thought it her duty to tell him, she said. He must never let Gerald know where he had learned it. He must go to the Palace Theatre to see for himself. She drew a shocking caricature of Chrissie as "a vulgar, little dancing-girl," who showed her "body more than half-naked on the stage." Her appeal to the old man's prudery was decisive; in an hour she had worked him up to a passionate resolution. By lunch-time she had assured herself that he knew just what he ought to say to Gerald.

The result was much what she anticipated. Stuttering with indignation, Mr. Lawrence went off to see Gerald next morning. He told him he was mad, that he must think of his career, and of decency, and so forth in the customary strain, and then returned to tell Mrs. Leighton all that he had said, leaving out the fact that he had asked Gerald why he didn't marry Mrs. Leighton, who was a lady of position and wealth, and beautiful to boot.

The suggestion startled Gerald as much as it angered him. He had never thought of such a thing, he said; besides, Mrs. Leighton was too old. But his father's unsparing condemnation of Chrissie had had a certain effect on him. The old man's scorn for the girl who could show off her figure in tights really lit unworthy jealous suspicions in Gerald which bore evil fruits later. He was compact of English prejudices; he began to doubt the girl's purity, which was as obvious as sunlight, because of the way she danced and dressed.

A few hours after his father had given Mrs. Leighton his version of the lecture he had administered to his son, Gerald betook himself to Wilton Place, too, for sympathy and advice. Mrs. Leighton began by soothing and flattering him. Of course, true love was beautiful, she said, the ideal; but he had a great career before him, and he should consider his father's feelings. Gerald ought to be a prince of the Church: princes only married common girls when they were born princes, but when they had to make themselves princes they could not afford to marry beneath them, and so forth.

"Don't you see, Chrissie's a miracle?" he asked glowering; "there's no one like her."

Mrs. Leighton admitted that she was very pretty, but added that he really must not idealise her out of all likeness to humanity; she was illiterate, of course, and vain, glad to accept anyone's attentions—both sisters were of the lower middle-class. She saw at once that she was on the right track. "Do you really care for her, really?" she asked.

He nodded, his face rigid with pain.

"Your father thinks you'll take her to Paris," she remarked casually, playing her trump boldly. Gerald, she felt, would soon tire of

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Chrissie in Paris.

He started to his feet. "Oh! He—you—"

She faced him bravely. "It would be the best thing you could do. (He glared at her.) Why should you quarrel with me, because I'd give you everything you want in life, I'd give you the moon if I could," and then she found the supreme word: "If you don't take her, Gerald, someone else will."

It struck him to the very heart. Yes, if he didn't take her Graham would, and Doris would not help her to resist; *she* certainly was lower middle-class, prim at once, and servile. And Chrissie, sweet though she was, was vain. What should he do?

His jealousy of Graham discoloured the world for him; "someone else" rankled.

He left Mrs. Leighton in a whirl of jealousy, desire and wounded vanity.

Was he really making an angel, as she had said, of a little dancing-girl; trying to see a London sparrow as a bird of paradise? How her words stung! They stung, he reflected, because of the truth in them. The picture of greasy, bald-headed Graham, like some obscene bird of prey, kept thrusting itself before his mind.

He could not rest in the Settlement. He went off to Mare Street to take them out. They were not in. The landlady confided to him that a gentleman had taken them out for the evening.

"What was he like?" Gerald asked, smiling to conceal his misery and rage.

"Oh, he was quite a gentleman—a foreign gentleman, I thought, a little elderly, but—he had brought fur wraps for both of them, real sable, Russian sable . . ." The landlady was voluble in the giver's praise. Gerald's heart throbbed; it was Graham. He turned from the door thanking her. But he was called back. In her eagerness to help, the landlady called out to him that she had heard the gentleman say they would take supper at the Savoy.

Gerald went to the Savoy, and there they were in the restaurant. He waited about for more than an hour to see them come out: Chrissie, flushed with excitement, talking sixteen to the dozen, as usual. His heart sank. As they reached the door he saw Graham put his hand on her bare arm to keep her back and let Doris go out first, and then he saw him, on the pretext of arranging her fur, touch her bare neck with his hand. Chrissie did not thrust him back, or shrink from his touch; she smiled at him, in fact, as she passed out.

Gerald was lost in jealous rage, dazed in agonies of doubt and fear. He was brought to himself by the porter tapping him on the arm:

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"We must close, sir, if you please."

The restaurant was shrouded, dark; only the lights over the desk threw uncertain gleams; the carriages had all rolled away. He went out into the empty street.

All through the night he stormed; but as hour after hour went on, one thing became dear to him—he would have her; he would not leave her to that foul beast, that old Jew satyr. He would take her away at once. He must make no mistake. He would go first to Mrs. Leighton and ask her advice. He was at her house by eight o'clock in the morning, and she saw him at half-past in her *peignoir*, and was all sympathy.

"You poor boy," she cried as she caught sight of him, "how ill you look!"

In spite of himself he told her everything—his doubts of Chrissie, his suspicions, everything—he raved to her, and then broke down and cried like a child with his head on her knees, sobbing hysterically. He alarmed her; she feared for his reason; she had never before understood how weak he was. There was nothing for it, she felt, but to give the child his toy. With this purpose she spoke, encouraging him. Of course, Chrissie loved him, but she was shallow and vain. He must be always with her, never leave her alone, he must take her to the theatre and back again, to dinner and to supper. If the other gave them furs, Gerald must give them dresses and hats. If the other recommended them to stage-managers, Gerald should take the stage-managers out to supper with them.

She concluded: "If Graham gets them a rise in salary, you must give them bracelets and brooches. Play the man," she cried at him finally, "and not the mouse."

Before she had half-finished, all the man in him had responded to her. He kissed her hands and caught her to him, and kissed her face, and hurried off to carry out her instructions, and to tread the primrose path to his desire.

In twenty-four hours he had reason to congratulate himself. In a week he had won Chrissie so that she had no thought or wish beyond him. The dresses he gave her and the jewels, forced even Doris to agree with the land-lady that he was madly in love; but still he could not induce Chrissie to take the irrevocable step and leave London. He wanted to get her away from Graham and his vile attentions; but to Chrissie leaving London meant leaving Doris and success on the stage. The girl's loyalty to her sister was invincible. He went again to Mrs. Leighton. Her advice was veiled, but decisive.

"Win her," she said, "and the girl will follow you."

"But how? What do you mean?" he asked.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“Do help me!”

Mrs. Leighton looked at him. Could any man be so inconceivably ignorant.

“Take her for a long drive,” she said at length, “up the river, or out to Hampstead, or to Richmond. Take a private room in some hotel—the Star and Garter if you like—and lunch and dine together; make up your mind and you are sure to win her”; with feminine malice she added, “she’s only waiting to be persuaded.”

Gerald went from her in a fever, resolute but still self-deceiving; he would not look facts in the face. But still, there could be no harm, he said to himself, in taking Chrissie out, and he engaged a private room and induced Chrissie to come with him alone.

They lunched together—he in a fever of excitement, Chrissie a little subdued and not quite at ease, but intensely happy. There was something thrilling to both of them in being alone together. He took delight in helping her to this and that, and then the joy of jumping up and kissing her while the waiter was out of the room; and afterwards, when the waiter had cleared away and left them, she kissed him, too, bravely, again and again, and Gerald took his love in his arms and they sat together for hours, almost without speaking, shut off from the world in the divine intimacy of passion. Gradually the dusky shadows crept in and filled the room and hid them from sight or sound, they two together, mouth on mouth, till the girl, too, gave herself wholly to love, and the dark eyes fluttered and lost themselves. . . .

A week later they were in Paris.

Although she expected the news, Mrs. Leighton took it badly; she spent the day given over to all the torments of jealousy: she cried with rage, and dried her tears in hot contempt of her rival; she burned and throbbed with desire, and cooled to frigid resolve and hate; at dinner she could not eat, complaining still of headache—it was heartache she felt, pain that gripped her heart and almost choked her. That he should prefer that vulgar, shallow little slut to her; that he was kissing her now and happy with her!—Good God! . . .

Next morning she went off to find Doris, determined to win her as she had won Gerald’s father. “With the two highest trumps in my hand,” she thought, “I can do as I like.”

She found Doris horrified and indignant, but she soon calmed her down, persuading her gradually that nothing need get about—“No one need know if we don’t tell.”

In a few days she had overcome all Doris’s suspiciousness. She was not in a hurry. There was time enough. Gerald should have his honeymoon. She would not be surprised, she said to herself, if the

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

honeymoon was quite long enough for him. She knew men pretty well, and her understanding of Gerald was uncanny. Meanwhile she had Doris to lunch and Doris to dinner, and bit by bit won the girl's complete confidence. When she told Doris she was much prettier than her sister, and must make a really sensible marriage with a good, steady man, Doris felt that at last she had met a real friend. Doris quickly came to admire Mrs. Leighton as a sort of model, for the two had a good deal in common. Mrs. Leighton knew the very moment when Doris turned from doubt of her to admiration, and then it was an easy matter to persuade her that it was her duty to go to Paris and put an end to the scandal by getting her sister to leave Gerald. By this time, too, Mrs. Leighton had worked up old Mr. Lawrence to go with her and help to bring the runaways to reason. Naturally she kept Mr. Lawrence and Doris steadily apart. It would never do to let them know each other, she felt; they were both of the same class, and like might recognise like. Besides, by keeping them apart she could use Doris as a whip to old Mr. Lawrence, and Mr. Lawrence as a bogey with which to frighten Doris. She really played her game with considerable ingenuity, served by jealous feminine instinct and by an unveiled understanding of both the physical and spiritual sides of the problem.

In a month, as Mrs. Leighton had foreseen, Gerald's passion had died of satiety; long before the month had come to an end, indeed, his physical weakness and Chrissie's natural tenderness had brought him almost to illness, his worn-out nerves vibrating between exhaustion and exasperation. In this state every little common phrase of Chrissie's jarred on him, her childishness seemed silly, her longings for her sister sentimental drivel. He soon felt that Mrs. Leighton had read the girl aright: she was shallow and ill-regulated—all in extremes. The truth was, his physical weakness rendered him incapable of making any allowance for Chrissie after the first few days, and he had no idea how lonely and disconsolate, how homesick and heartsick, she became in the foreign capital. Chrissie was hardly more than a child—a gregarious, ingenuous, vain, charming little creature who lived on praise and hopes of pleasure. When her sister didn't want to talk, she talked to the landlady or to the servant; there was constant companionship for her in Hackney. Here in Paris there was no one to talk to, no one to admire her, nothing on earth to do. In three days she began to be bored, and every effort she made to win Gerald seemed to result in failure. After the first week he hardly wanted to speak to her; she had no understanding of him at all; she was hurt, and then indignant. She began to notice his faults and became increasingly dissatisfied: he

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

was always polite, but he did nothing but read and read, and whenever they went out he took her to churches and picture galleries and museums where she could only see old frumps and fogeys. She was like a young bird used to sunshine and gay, quick flirts of flight and snatches of song, thrust to solitary quiet in a gloomy cage; for to her the vast hotel was a cage or a prison. If that was love she hated it. All the little differences of sex and temperament brought her to tears. Gerald seemed to get tired of her petting and caressing and loving; she could only believe he was getting tired of her. When she thought of a new way of amusing him by coming behind him in a new dress and blindfolding him, he got cross and cold, and never noticed the dress. From the beginning she had regretted yielding to him without marriage, and every day she regretted it more; it seemed wrong to her to be living with him. She hadn't wanted to leave her sister, and now she wanted to see her more and more till she ached with the longing.

One afternoon Doris walked into her bedroom, and Chrissie threw herself into her arms and burst into inarticulate sobbings of regret and relief. For over an hour Doris could do nothing but kiss and comfort her: "Everything would come right, everything; she must be sure of that. She would not leave her again . . ." for Chrissie seemed heartbroken, and clung to her as if afraid. She never even noticed Gerald's absence, never knew that he had gone to call on Mrs. Leighton in answer to a telegram; Doris was everything to her.

Doris's rage against Gerald, which unconsciously had a tincture of sex jealousy in it, grew to cold hatred as she realised how unhappy her little sister had been. She had always been a little envious of Chrissie, for Chrissie had outshone her as a dancer by dint of a little more courage in displaying her feelings, and now she realised with a certain satisfaction that it was this thoughtless courage which had brought Chrissie to grief. But the recognition of her own superiority of nature only made her more pitiful to her little sister. So she comforted Chrissie, assured her that everything would be all right; she mustn't worry, everything would be arranged.

"He's not been unkind to you, has he?" she asked.

"No," sobbed Chrissie, "not exactly unkind, but men are so different from what I thought, so different. He's all the time reading and teaching me, and I don't want to be improved. He didn't want me to write to you till I could write without making mistakes, as if that mattered. He's nice, but he's a fool." "Prig" was probably the word she would have used if she had known it. Her little vanity had resented the teacher's attitude which Gerald assumed all too easily. Her resentment seemed inexplicable even to herself; for at bottom she was loyal.



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"He's good, you know," she explained, "and I think, perhaps, he loves me in his way; but men are so different from us, so different," and she clung to her sister in an April storm of smiling and sobbing—heart at ease, at last, in that custom of affection which means so much to women. While comforting her sister, Doris did not lose sight of her mission.

"You must leave him, Chrissie," she said at length; "it's wrong to live like this without being married."

"He'll marry me," replied Chrissie in astonishment, drawing away, "he said he would."

"How can he without money!" replied Doris, coached by Mrs. Leighton. "His father is furious, and won't give him a penny unless he leaves you."

"But he can't leave me," cried Chrissie, horror-stricken; "he promised, and where could I go? I could never show my face again. Oh!" and she blanched with a thousand fears.

"We'll make it all right, dear," comforted Doris, "no one need ever know, and I'll never leave you again, and you must never leave me, you naughty, naughty, little sis to run away and never say a word."

"He wouldn't let me tell you. I wanted to," cried Chrissie, always repentant on this score. "I really wanted to; you must believe me."

And Doris did believe her, and soon managed to find out that there was no new reason why her sister should not leave Gerald. As soon as she was assured of this, she immediately adopted Mrs. Leighton's view that five pounds a week for life was a very good substitute indeed for a man who would always be ashamed of one, and who had been unkind even on the honeymoon. Besides, Mrs. Leighton was right. Chrissie was too young to be married; the elder sister should marry first.

Doris returned to Mrs. Leighton to tell her that Gerald had "behaved shameful" to Chrissie and that if she could have her sister to herself for a day or two, she'd get Chrissie reconciled to leaving him. Mrs. Leighton must keep Gerald away for a little while.

Gerald found Mrs. Leighton in an attitude of resigned sorrow; she even blamed him a little:

"You've hurt your father, Gerald," she said, "and I think you ought to be kind to him."

In some confusion, for he was not prepared for this condemnation from his confederate, Gerald promised to be nice, but—

Mrs. Leighton left the room, and his father came to him. Mr. Lawrence had been well schooled; he acted the heavy father to the life. "Enough of this fooling," was about all he could find to say.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"You've had your fling, and now it's all over. You look shocking bad, Gerald," he added in his natural kindly way.

"I'm going to marry Chrissie," said Gerald with quiet firmness.

"You're mad; you'd never be such a fool," roared the old man, his real opinions breaking through the veneer of custom. "What can the girl do for you?" And then, bethinking himself of the argument supplied to him: "If you do marry her, you'll not get a penny of my money, I can tell you. I won't be a party to such folly. You must be a softie to talk such nonsense. I've no patience with you."

Mrs. Leighton had to appear to prevent them quarrelling, but his father's angry outburst had its effect on Gerald. Mrs. Leighton managed to persuade him not to go back to his hotel that night. "You'll only meet Doris," she said, "and she's furious with you. There'll be a scene if you two meet."

But, in spite of Gerald's hatred of a scene, he utterly refused to leave Paris without first seeing Chrissie, and getting his dismissal from her own lips.

"If Chrissie doesn't want me, I'll do whatever you like," was his final word.

Underneath his disillusion and weakness there was a small fount of passionate tenderness. If Chrissie was, indeed, tired of him, he'd go; otherwise nothing would induce him to leave her. His father might do what he pleased with his money. Mrs. Leighton was astonished at his obstinacy. 'Twas Doris saved the situation. She told Mrs. Leighton that in another twenty-four hours she'd answer for Chrissie, and she got the time she wanted.

The pair met in the presence of Mrs. Leighton and Doris.

"Do you want to leave me, Chrissie?" cried Gerald, holding out his hands to her.

"What can I do?" she replied. "Your father won't give you anything, and he hates me and you—you—" and she burst into tears and fell into her sister's arms.

"Don't you think you've done her enough harm?" barked Doris savagely, and in despair Gerald obeyed Mrs. Leighton's gesture and left the room.

"He never even kissed me," wept Chrissie.

"We're well rid of him," snapped Doris viciously; "he cares for no one much, not even for himself."

And so Mrs. Leighton had her way, and took a very sulky, hurt and subdued Gerald back to London with his father, while the sisters Weldon drifted out again into their own world under improved conditions. For despite what romantic authors may say, such wounds as

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Chrissie's heal quickly in healthy flesh.

But though Mrs. Leighton had got her way, she was far too clever to try to reap the reward at once. Besides she was a little annoyed and hurt with Gerald for the struggle he had cost her and the trouble he had put her to. She shut herself up in her house in Wilton Place, and gave out that she was not well enough to receive. But the separation was short. Gerald was more unable than ever to endure loneliness; he needed sympathy and praise; in fact, he missed Mrs. Leighton now from morning till night, he simply could not do without her. And she could not resist his importunity.

For a long time he seemed emptied of ambition, the spring of life broken in him. Mrs. Leighton soon noticed the listlessness, but hoped to bring him back quickly to his old self. For some months, however, her hopes were in vain, and the reason lay beyond her fathoming. The truth is, whenever he got a little strength, thoughts of Chrissie came to him; tender memories of their life together in Paris—that life which had seemed so full of disappointments at the time, but which now had become charming and beautiful to him in retrospect. All the little disagreements and pains dropped out of his mind, and he only remembered the exquisite moments of joy and tenderness. At such times his whole being was given over to love of Chrissie, and to regret that he had ever left her. Since she had faded out of his life, he realised that no one would ever delight him as she had delighted him. Existence seemed dull and futile, stale to loathing. In vain he fasted; in vain he read for twelve or fourteen hours a day; he could only tire himself; and as soon as he was rested, the memory of Chrissie came back to him to torment him, and to make of all the best moments of his life one passionate regret. During the day he could at least struggle with the obsession, or even forget it over a book, or in talk; but at night he was defenceless, and memories of her child-love and pretty caresses broke his sleep. As he was unable to banish the vivid dreams by any effort of will, he held himself guiltless in regard to them, and, with the casuistry of desire, soon went further. He accustomed himself to think of Chrissie just before going to sleep, a habit which he soon found made dreaming of her almost a certainty. The self-indulgence soon began to tell on his health, and so, as time went on, he did not get stronger, but weaker. His father could not make out what was the matter with him; he lost all patience with his moping as he called it.

Mrs. Leighton, with her feminine intuition, had a clearer idea of Gerald's suffering and the necessary remedy.

One day Mr. Lawrence had been complaining that Gerald

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

seemed to be growing weaker, and Mrs. Leighton told him plainly that Gerald was killing himself, and that there was only one way to save him. He understood her, and begged her to take Gerald in hand without delay. A little while after they were engaged, and Mrs. Leighton set herself to fight the memory of Chrissie as she had fought and beaten Chrissie herself. But she found the memory and aura of the girl formidable antagonists. Still she struggled on with tenacity and ability.

She got Gerald ordained as a priest with great ceremony. She arranged an invitation for him to preach his first sermon in one of the most important London churches, and she took care that the church should be filled with a very select audience. She advised him about his sermon, and made him rehearse it again and again to her till every effect was perfect. His first appearance in London as a preacher was a social event. He had brought with him from Oxford a great reputation, and the couple of years in which people had lost sight of him only added to their eagerness to see whether he had fulfilled his youthful promise.

In the interval, too, Lord Woodstock had become a prominent politician, and already a good many Conservatives looked upon him as the coming leader of the party. Woodstock's high opinion of the "Saint" was of itself sufficient to have filled the church, but there were other influences at work.

Gerald was what is called "High Church." In all cases of doubt he turned to the practices of the early Christians, and accordingly was supported by this militant section of the Church.

He chose his text from the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians. He read the sentences out in the toneless, impressive way already described: "*The enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction . . . whose God is their belly . . . who mind earthly things . . .*"

Again and again he repeated the text: "*The enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction . . . whose God is their belly . . . who mind earthly things . . .*"

The most original thing in the sermon was the way he dwelt on the necessity of fasting, and the benefits to be derived from it. "Fasting," he said, "had gradually grown into a rule and become a part of the discipline of the Catholic Church. Why? Because of the virtue in it: because of its good effects. . . . The whole world was being ransacked to-day to satisfy the desires of the rich of our great cities. Birds were brought from Asia, meat from New Zealand, fish from the northern oceans, fruits from the uttermost parts of the earth, wines were grown with such care that every leaf was cleansed and cherished,

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

and yet Paul asserted that those *'whose God is their belly . . . who mind earthly things . . . are the enemies of the cross . . . doomed to destruction . . .'*"

The earthly custom was to pamper the appetite, the Christian rule was abstinence. He declared that those who had not undergone the discipline were incapable of the highest thought—they were enemies of perfection. Perfect health, he asserted, could only be found by fasting regularly. It was one of the means to perfectness. . . .

This contradiction between the earthly custom and the heavenly rule offered an easy test of the truth of the Christian doctrine. No doctor would ever tell you to fast. He would tell you to eat and drink moderately. That was the Pagan idea of virtue—Aristotle's idea. The wise of this world would regard fasting as an extreme, as they regarded gluttony as an extreme; virtue was in moderation. This was as far as the wisdom of the world went, but the wisdom of the Cross went further—it went to an extreme, it promised a more perfect health to those who denied themselves and fasted.

"It is within the reach of everyone to find out for himself or for herself," he said, "whether the discipline of the Church is good or bad. It is an easy thing to fast for one day. Everyone in this church, everyone now listening to me, should fast this coming Friday, and on Saturday you will all know whether the words of my text come from God or not. You will then find out whether those who 'mind earthly things' are indeed vowed to success, as most people imagine; or to 'destruction,' as St. Paul asserted . . ."

The sermon was an unexpected success even among men who cared little for the spirituality of the preacher's appearance. Was fasting, indeed, a means of perfection, they wondered. It was a new idea to them. Here Gerald had really preached new words, for he had new knowledge, new personal experience to back him.

After the sermon Woodstock accompanied Gerald to lunch at Mrs. Leighton's. He called Gerald the "Saint"; told him he must be careful not to fast too much; admitted that he himself was beginning to get stout since he had dropped all exercise. "In fact, I'm going to try Gerald's remedy," he added laughingly.

At the end of the meal he told Gerald very quietly that he would do anything to help him at any time.

"I don't want to be included among the enemies," he added, "even if I do mind earthly things."

Though Mrs. Leighton took care that Gerald should hear all the praise his sermon called forth, his success did not inspire the preacher as she had hoped. He soon dropped back into listless regret, into a

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

sort of melancholy brooding. Mrs. Leighton realised that something would have to be done at once—she married him. . . .

At first the experiment seemed to be an utter failure. Gerald got worse instead of better; he began to cough, and alarmed her about his health. She took him to the Riviera without result. The gaiety and distractions of Nice and Monte Carlo only left him more and more listless and tired. After a great deal of thought she resolved to take him to the Holy Land.

It says much for her unselfishness and real kindness of nature that she passed two years with him in Palestine and the Near East without complaining of the many hardships, or even regretting London society, and at length she had her reward, such as it was.

In the course of the first winter spent in Palestine, Gerald began to get interested in the spirit of Christianity. The creed had something in it which suited his nature; its lessons of humility and loving sympathy appealed to him, just as the self-renunciations of the Church had appealed to him. He encouraged himself in the belief that he, too, had been “called and chosen.”

While living in Jerusalem, and visiting Bethlehem, and Capernaum, and Gennesaret, and all the other sacred places, and steeping himself in the Epistles, Gerald began to feel the stirrings of a new ambition; might not he, too, “conquer through his own weakness”, as St. Paul had done?

After he had exhausted the Holy Land, he determined to follow the journeyings of St. Paul in a small sailing ship; he even stopped at all the places where the great Apostle had stopped, and thus, after many experiences, came in spring-time by way of Naples to Rome.

His spiritual history all the while was intimately affected by his bodily health. As ambition awoke in him and his life grew more attractive, he dreamed less, and as the spiritual ideal grew stronger, the image of Chrissie gradually dwined away. For the first couple of years of married life his relations with his wife had been platonic. He now began to be troubled about his behaviour to her; perhaps he had done wrong.

In the great church dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, outside the walls of Rome, he was vouchsafed new spiritual guidance, and underwent what he always afterwards regarded as his “consecration.”

To him the place was sacred; the very road beyond the walls was the road trodden by the indomitable missionary—“*persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed.*” He walked along it as he imagined the two Apostles had walked together; he stopped where tradition says they stopped, and in the great church at eventide he knelt

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

and prayed. Suddenly he realised that the past was past, that he must begin a new life. The vision of "what is perfect" overpowered him, and the relief he felt in the new decision was evidence to him of heavenly interposition and leading.

He went back to his wife in the hotel, and took her in his arms and kissed her: "I was blind, and now I see," dear," he said to her, and she was content to take it at that.

When they returned to England Gerald felt his path straight before him; the taproots of his success would be his own personal experiences. The passion which had almost wrecked his life, which had brought him to misery, he would preach against, as St. Paul had preached against it. Fasting had given him new ideas and renewed health, had taught him that renunciation was a step to perfection, and it never occurred to him that what was evil to him might be good to a stronger man. He would advocate two of St. Francis' three vows—poverty, which really meant fasting and chastity.

In the brutal materialism and mawkish sentimentality of London his preaching had an extraordinary effect. His special knowledge of the Holy Land helped him to vivify every sermon. He was made a Canon of Westminster, and as he only preached three or four times a year on account of weak health, his sermons soon became social functions.

Ten years later he was made a bishop, and Woodstock brought half a dozen of his colleagues, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, to hear his first sermon.

Ever since his return to England Gerald had led a life of persistent self-denial by night and by day; for years he had eaten no meat, and drunk nothing but water; he had tried to reach the Christian ideal. He had been helped by his weaknesses rather than by his endowments; as far as he could go, he had gone. He had aged twenty years in the last ten, and at thirty-six was already an old man. His hair was silver-white, the flame of life burned low in him, his self-denying asceticism had brought him to the edge of things where one looks into the void and shudders at the ghostly air. All this spiritualised his appearance and intensified the power of his preaching. Our souls get subdued to the stuff we work in, and Gerald's whole nature now for years and years had been steeped in self-renunciation, gentleness and spiritual aspiration.

The great abbey was full of distinguished people; such an audience had rarely been brought together. As usual, Gerald had prepared every word. He had chosen his text with extreme care. He had taken it from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians: "*If I must needs*

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

*glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities."*

The Archbishop, a stout, healthy, thrusting prelate and man of the world, had a good-natured contempt for Gerald, and had come to the service in a spirit of utter disbelief in his saintliness; but he could not prevent a thrill of emotion and wonderment as Gerald rose in the pulpit and looked out over the congregation. His silver hair, refined, thin features and great eyes had their accustomed effect: his voice was so toneless that it had no individuality, it seemed superhuman, so to speak, in its impersonal monotony:

*"If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities"*—again and again Gerald let the text sink in.

The long pauses were partly due to physical weakness, partly to the fact that on this day of days he was resolved to follow the example of Paul himself, and to glory in the confession of his own shortcomings. He told how he used to eat and drink and mind earthly things, and how fasting had led him to the upward path. He told, too, with many breaks in his utterance of the temptations of passion, the humiliations it entailed, its bitter disappointments; he spoke with a dying fall in his voice of its transitoriness, its fleeting summer, its haunting remorse; the only consolation was that it pointed to higher things, as shadows all point to the sun.

The latter part of the sermon had no sequence in it. Gerald had yielded to his emotion while controlling its expression, and the effort had exhausted him. In the hush of reverent sympathy fragments of loved texts fell from his lips. He desired, he said, to look not at *the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"

After another pause, the slow words fell one by one on the breathless silence:

*"I will very gladly spend and be spent for you,"* and then the voice died away and the preacher's head drooped forward on the desk—he had fainted.

The effect on the audience was extraordinary; women sobbed aloud, and men unused to weeping had to sniff and cough.

They carried Gerald to the sacristy. The Archbishop and Woodstock stood about while his wife tended him. As soon as he was able to sit up he was full of apologies.

"I am so sorry," he said. "I am afraid I should not have attempted it; my weakness is too great."

They encouraged him, but his eyes closed in another syncope. At his wife's suggestion the two went away leaving him to her.



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“I think I was right,” said Woodstock to the Archbishop, “to speak of Gerald Lawrence as a saint.”

The Archbishop sniffed; though there was not much thought in him there was a considerable knowledge of life and a very rank scepticism:

“Humph! H’m!” he grunted. “His spirituality seemed to me to be of fasting and not of faith; but I daresay he’s a good man”; and then, thinking of Gerald’s pathetic attempt to smile in the sacristy, he added: “Perhaps he’s as near a saint as we’re likely to see.”

### THE MAGIC GLASSES

*Published in the Collection Unpath’d Waters (1913)*

ONE raw November morning, I left my rooms near the British Museum and walked along Oxford Street. It was cold and misty: the air like shredded cottonwool. Before I reached the Quadrant, the mist thickened to fog, with the colour of muddied water, and walking became difficult. As I had no particular object in view, I got into talk with a policeman, and, by his advice, went into the Vine Street Police Court, to pass an hour or two before lunch. Inside the court, the atmosphere was comparatively clear, and I took my seat on one of the oak benches with a feeling of vague curiosity. There was a case going on as I entered: an old man, who pretended to be an optician, had been taken up by the police for obstructing the traffic by selling glasses. His green tray, with leathern shoulder-straps, was on the solicitors’ table. The charge of obstruction could not be sustained; the old man had moved on as soon as the police told him to, and the inspector had substituted a charge of fraud, on the complaint of a workman and a shopkeeper. A constable had just finished his evidence when I came into the court. He left the box with a self-satisfied air and the muttered remark that the culprit was “a rare bad ’un.”

I glanced about for the supposed criminal and found that he was seated near me on a cross-bench in the charge of a sturdy policeman. He did not look like a criminal: he was tall, thin and badly dressed in a suit of rusty black, which seemed to float about his meagre person; his complexion was tallowy-white, like the sprouts of potatoes which have been kept a long time in a dark cellar; he seemed about sixty years old. But he had none of the furtive glances of the criminal; none of the uneasiness: his eye rested on mine and passed aside with calm indifference, contemplative and not alarmed.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

The workman who was produced by the police in support of the charge of fraud amused me. He was a young man, about middle height, and dressed in corduroys with a rough jacket of dark tweed. He was a bad witness: he hesitated, stopped and corrected himself, as if he didn't know the meaning of any words except the commonest phrases of everyday use. But he was evidently honest: his brown eyes looked out on the world fairly enough. His faltering came from the fact that he was only half articulate. Disentangled from the mist of inappropriate words, his meaning was sufficiently clear.

He had been asked by the accused, whom he persisted in calling "the old gentleman," to buy a pair of spectacles: they would show him things truer-like than he could see 'em; and so he "went a bob on 'em." Questioned by the magistrate as to whether he could see things more plainly through the glasses, he shook his head:

"No; about the same."

Then came the question: Had he been deceived? Apparently he didn't know the meaning of the word "deceived."

"Cheated," the magistrate substituted.

"No; he hadn't been cheated."

"Well, disappointed then?"

"No; he couldn't say that."

"Would he spend another shilling on a similar pair of glasses?"

"No," he would not; "one bob was enough to lose."

When told he might go, he shuffled out of the witness-box, and on his way to the door attempted more than once to nod to the accused. Evidently there was no malice in him.

The second police witness had fluency and self-possession enough for a lawyer: a middle-aged man, tall, florid and inclined to be stout; he was over-dressed, like a spruce shopman, in black frock-coat, grey trousers and light-coloured tie. He talked volubly, with a hot indignation which seemed to match his full red cheeks. If the workman was an undecided and weak witness, Mr. Hallett, of High Holborn, was a most convinced and determined witness. He had been induced to buy the glasses, he declared, by the "old party," who told him that they would show him things exactly as they were—the truth of everything. You'd only have to look through 'em at a man to see whether he was trying to "do" you or not. That was why he bought them. He was not asked a shilling for them, but a sovereign and he gave it—twenty shillings. When he put the glasses on, he could see nothing with them, nothing at all; it was a "plant": and so he wanted the "old party" to take 'em back and return his sovereign; that might have caused the obstruction that the policeman had objected to. The

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“old man” refused to give him his money back; said he had not cheated him; had the impudence to pretend that he (Hallett) had no eyes for truth, and, therefore, could see nothing with the glasses. “A blamed lie,” he called it, and a “do,” and the “old man” ought to get six months for it.

Once or twice, the magistrate had to direct the stream of emphatic words. But the accusation was formal and precise. The question now was: How would the magistrate deal with the case? At first sight, Mr. Brown, the magistrate, made a good impression on me. He was getting on in life: the dark hair was growing thin on top and a little grey at the sides. The head was well-shaped; the forehead notably broad; the chin and jaw firm. The only unpleasant feature in the face was the hard line of mouth, with thin, unsympathetic lips. Mr. Brown was reputed to be a great scholar, and was just the type of man who would have made a pedant; a man of good intellect and thin blood, who would find books and words more interesting than men and deeds.

At first, Mr. Brown had seemed to be on the side of the accused: he tried to soften Mr. Hallett’s anger. One or two of his questions, indeed, were pointed and sensible:

“You wouldn’t take goods back after you had sold them, would you, Mr. Hallett?” he asked..

“Of course I would,” replied Mr. Hallett stoutly; “I’d take any of my stock back at a twenty per cent, reduction; my goods are honest goods: prices marked plain on ’em. But ’e would not give me fifteen shillings back out of my sovereign; not ’e; ’e meant stickin’ to it all.”

The magistrate looked into the body of the court and, addressing the accused, said:

“Will you reserve your defence, Mr. Henry?”

“Penry, your worship: Matthew Penry,” corrected the old man in a quiet, low-pitched voice, as he rose to his feet. “If I may say so: the charge of fraud is absurd. Mr. Hallett seems to be angry because I sold one pair of glasses for a shilling and another pair to him for a sovereign. But they were not the same glasses and, if they had been, I am surely allowed to ask for my wares what I please.”

“That is true,” interrupted the magistrate; “but he says that you told him he would see the truth through them. I suppose you meant that he would see more truly through them than with his own eyes?”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Penry, with a certain hesitation.

“But he did not see more truly through them,” continued the magistrate, “or he would not have wanted you to take them back.”

“No,” Mr. Penry acknowledged; “but that is his fault, not the fault of the glasses. They would show the truth, if he had any faculty for

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

seeing it: glasses are no good to the blind.”

“Come, come,” said the magistrate; “now you are beginning to confuse me. You don’t really pretend that your glasses will show the truth of things, the reality; you mean that they will improve one’s sight, don’t you?”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Penry, “one’s sight for truth, for reality.”

“Well,” retorted the magistrate smiling, “that seems rather metaphysical than practical, doesn’t it? If your spectacles enable one to discern the truth, I’d buy a pair myself: they might be useful in this court sometimes,” and he looked about him with a smile, as if expecting applause.

With eager haste, the old man took him at his word, threw open his case, selected a pair of glasses and passed them to the clerk, who handed them up to Mr. Brown.

The magistrate put the glasses on; looked round the court for a minute or two, and then broke out:

“Dear me! Dear me! How extraordinary! These glasses alter everyone in the court. It’s really astonishing. They don’t improve the looks of people; on the contrary, a more villainous set of countenances it would be difficult to imagine. If these glasses are to be trusted, men are more like wild animals than human beings, and the worst of all are the solicitors; really a terrible set of faces. But this may be the truth of things; these spectacles do show one more than one’s ordinary eyes can perceive. Dear me! Dear me! It is most astonishing; but I feel inclined to accept Mr. Penry’s statement about them,” and he peered over the spectacles at the court.

“Would you like to look in a glass, your worship?” asked one of the solicitors drily, rising, however, to his feet with an attitude of respect at the same time; “perhaps that would be the best test.”

Mr. Brown appeared to be a little surprised, but replied:

“If I had a glass, I would willingly.”

Before the words were out of his mouth, his clerk had tripped round the bench, gone into the magistrate’s private room, and returned with a small looking-glass, which he handed up to his worship.

As Mr. Brown looked in the glass, the smile of expectancy left his face. In a moment or two, he put down the glass gravely, took off the spectacles and handed them to the clerk, who returned them to Mr. Penry. After a pause, he said shortly:

“It is well, perhaps, to leave all these matters of fact to a jury. I will accept a small bail, Mr. Penry,” he went on; “but I think you must be bound over to answer this charge at the sessions.”

I caught the words, “£50 apiece in two sureties and his own

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

recognisances in £100,” and then Mr. Penry was told by the policeman to go and wait in the body of the court till the required sureties were forthcoming. By chance, the old man came and sat beside me and I was able to examine him closely. His moustache and beard must have been auburn at one time, but now the reddish tinge seemed only to discolour the grey. The beard was thin and long and unkempt, and added to the forlorn untidiness of his appearance. He carried his head bent forward, as if the neck were too weak to support it. He seemed feeble and old and neglected. He caught me looking at him, and I noticed that his eyes were a clear blue, as if he were younger than I had thought. His gentle, scholarly manner and refined voice had won my sympathy; and, when our eyes met, I introduced myself and told him I should be glad to be one of his sureties, if that would save him time or trouble. He thanked me with a sort of detached courtesy: he would gladly accept my offer.

“You stated your case,” I remarked, “so that you confused the magistrate. You almost said that your glasses were—magic glasses,” I went on, smiling and hesitating, because I did not wish to offend him, and yet hardly knew how to convey the impression his words had left upon me.

“Magic glasses,” he repeated gravely, as if weighing the words; “yes, you might call them magic glasses.”

To say that I was astonished only gives a faint idea of my surprise and wonder:

“Surely, you don’t mean that they show things as they are,” I asked: “the truth of things?”

“That is what I mean,” he replied quietly.

“Then they are not ordinary glasses?” I remarked inanely.

“No,” he repeated gravely; “not ordinary glasses.”

He had a curious trick, I noticed, of peering at one very intently with narrowed eyes and then blinking rapidly several times in succession as if the strain were too great to be borne.

He had made me extremely curious, and yet I did not like to ask outright to be allowed to try a pair of his glasses; so I went on with my questions:

“But, if they show truth, how was it that Mr. Hallett could see nothing through them?”

“Simply because he has no sense of reality; he has killed the innate faculty for truth. It was probably at no time very great,” went on this strange merchant, smiling; “but his trader’s habits have utterly destroyed it; he has so steeped himself in lies that he is now blind to the truth, incapable of perceiving it. The workman, you remember, could

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

see fairly well through his spectacles.”

“Yes,” I replied laughing; “and the magistrate evidently saw a good deal more through his than he cared to acknowledge.”

The old man laughed, too, in an ingenuous, youthful way that I found charming.

At last I got to the Rubicon.

“Would you let me buy a pair of your glasses?” I asked.

“I shall be delighted to give you a pair, if you will accept them,” he replied, with eager courtesy; “my surety ought certainly to have a pair”; and then he peered at me in his curious, intent way. A moment later, he turned round, and, opening his tray, picked out a pair of spectacles and handed them to me.

I put them on with trembling eagerness and stared about me. The magistrate had told the truth; they altered everything; the people were the same and yet not the same; this face was coarsened past all description; that face sharpened and made hideous with greed; while another was brutalised with lust. One recognised, so to speak, the dominant passion in each person. Something moved me to turn my glasses on the merchant; if I was astounded before, I was now lost in wonder: the glasses transfigured him. The grey beard was tinged with gold, the blue eyes luminous with intelligence; all the features ennobled; the countenance irradiated sincerity and kindness. I pulled off the glasses hastily and the vision passed away. Mr. Penry was looking at me with a curious little pleased smile of anticipation: involuntarily, I put out my hand to him with a sort of reverence:

“Wonderful,” I exclaimed; “your face is wonderful and all the others grotesque and hideous. What does it mean? Tell me! Won’t you?”

“You must come with me to my room,” he said, “where we can talk freely, and I think you will not regret having helped me. I should like to explain everything to you. There are so few men,” he added, “who proffer help to another man in difficulty. I should like to show you that I am grateful.”

“There is no cause for gratitude,” I said hastily; “I have done nothing.”

His voice now seemed to me to be curiously refined and impressive, and recalled to me the vision of his face, made beautiful by the strange glasses. . . .

I have been particular to put down how Mr. Penry first appeared to me, because after I had once seen him through his spectacles, I never saw him again as I had seen him at first. Remembering my earliest impressions of him, I used to wonder how I could have been so

mistaken. His face had refinement and gentleness in every line; a certain courage, too, that was wholly spiritual. Already I was keenly interested in Mr. Penry; eager to know more about him; to help him, if that were possible, in any and every way.

Some time elapsed before the formalities for his bail were arranged, and then I persuaded him to come out with me to lunch. He got up quietly, put the leathern straps over his shoulders, tucked the big case under his arm and walked into the street with perfect self-possession; and I was not now in any way ashamed of his appearance, as I should have been an hour or two before: I was too excited even to feel pride; I was simply glad and curious.

And this favourable impression grew with everything Mr. Penry said and did, till at last nothing but service would content me; so, after lunch, I put him into a cab and drove him off to my own solicitor. I found Mr. Morris, of Messrs. Morris, Coote and Co., quite willing to take up his case at the sessions; willing, too, to believe that the charge was "trumped up" by the police and without serious foundation. But, when I drew Mr. Morris aside and tried to persuade him that his new client was a man of extraordinary powers, he smiled incredulously.

"You are enthusiastic, Mr. Winter," he said half reproachfully; "but we solicitors are compelled to see things in the cold light of reason. Why should you undertake to defend this Mr. Penry? Of course if you have made up your mind," he went on, passing over my interruption, "I shall do my best for him; but if I were you, I'd keep my eyes open and do nothing rashly."

In order to impress him, I put on a similar cold tone and declared that Mr. Penry was a friend of mine and that he must leave no stone unturned to vindicate his honesty. And with this I went back to Mr. Penry, and we left the office together.

Mr. Penry's lodging disappointed me; my expectations, I am afraid, were now tuned far above the ordinary. It was in Chelsea, high up, in a rickety old house overlooking a dingy road and barges drawn up on the slimy, fetid mud-banks. And yet, even here, romance was present for the romantic; the fog-wreaths curling over the river clothed the houses opposite in soft mystery, as if they had been draped in blue samite, and through the water-laden air the sun glowed round and red as a fiery wheel of Phaeton's chariot. The room was very bare; by the broad low window stood a large deal table crowded with instruments and glasses; strong electric lamps on the right and left testified to the prolonged labours of the optician. The roof of the garret ran up towards the centre, and by the wall there was a low truckle-bed, fenced off by a cheap Japanese paper-screen. The whole of the wall between

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

the bed and the window was furnished with plain pine-shelves, filled with books; everything was neat, but the room seemed friendless and cold in the thick, damp air.

There we sat and talked together, till the sun slid out of sight and the fog thickened and night came on: there our acquaintance, so strangely begun, grew to friendship. Before we went to dinner, the old man had shown me the portraits of his two daughters and a little miniature of his wife, who had died fifteen years before.

It was the first of many talks in that room, the first of many confidences. Bit by bit, I heard the whole of Mr. Penry's history. It was told to me piecemeal and inconsequently, as a friend talks to a friend in growing intimacy; and, if I now let Mr. Penry tell his tale in regular sequence and at one stretch, it is mainly in order to spare the reader the tedium of interrupted narration and needless repetitions.

\* \* \*

"My father was an optician," Mr. Penry began, "and a maker of spectacles in Chelsea. We lived over the shop in the King's Road, and my childhood was happy enough, but not in any way peculiar. Like other healthy children, I liked play much better than lessons; but my school-days were too uneventful, too empty of love to be happy. My mother died when I was too young to know or regret her; my father was kind, in spite of his precise, puritanical ways. I was the only boy, which perhaps made him kinder to me, and very much younger than my two sisters, who were grown up when I was in short clothes and who married and left my father's house before I had got to know them, or to feel much affection for them.

"When I was about sixteen, my father took me from school and began teaching me his own trade. He had been an admirable workman in his time, of the old English sort—careful and capable, though somewhat slow. The desire was always present in him to grind and polish each glass as well as he could, and this practice had given him a certain repute with a circle of good customers. He taught me every part of his craft as he had learnt it; and, in the next five or six years, imbued me with his own wish to do each piece of work as perfectly as possible. But this period of initiation did not last long. Before I reached manhood, I began to draw apart from my father, to live my own life and to show a love of reading and thinking foreign to his habit. It was religion which separated us. At school I had learnt some French and German, and in both languages I came across sceptical opinions which slowly grew in my mind, and in time led me to discard



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

and almost to dislike the religion of my father. I mention this simply because any little originality in me seemed to spring from this inquiry and from the mental struggle that convulsed three or four years of my youth. For months and months I read feverishly to conquer my doubts, and then I read almost as eagerly to confirm my scepticism.

“I still remember the glow of surprise and hope which came over me the first time I read that Spinoza, one of the heroes of my thought, had also made his living by polishing glasses. He was the best workman of his time, it appeared, and I determined to become the best workman of my time; from that moment, I took to my trade seriously, strenuously.

“I learned everything I could about glass, and began to make my own material, after the best recipes. I got books on optics, too, and studied them, and so, bit by bit, mastered the science of my craft.

“I was not more than nineteen or twenty when my father found out that I was a much better workman than his assistant Thompson. Some glasses had been sent to us from a great oculist in Harley Street, with a multitude of minute directions. They had been made by Thompson, and were brought back to us one afternoon by a very fidgety old gentleman who declared that they did not suit him at all. The letter which he showed from Sir William Creighton, the oculist, hinted that the glasses were not carefully made. My father was out and, in his absence, I opened the letter. As soon as I had looked at the glasses, I saw that the complaint was justified, and I told the old gentleman so. He turned out to be the famous parliamentary speaker, Lord B. He said to me testily:

“‘All right, young man; you make my glasses correctly and I shall be satisfied; but not till then; you understand, not till then.’

“I smiled at him and told him I would do the work myself, and he went out of the shop muttering, as if only half reassured by my promises. Then I determined to show what I could do. When my father returned, I told him what had happened, and asked him to leave the work to me. He consented, and I went off at once to the little workshop I had made in our back-yard and settled down to the task. I made my glass and polished it, and then ground the spectacles according to the directions. When I had finished, I sent them to Sir William Creighton with a note, and a few days afterwards we had another visit from Lord B., who told my father that he had never had such glasses and that I was a ‘perfect treasure.’ Like many very crochety people, he was hard to satisfy, but once satisfied he was as lavish in praise as in blame. Lord B. made my reputation as a maker of spectacles and for years I was content with this little triumph. . . .

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“I married when I was about two or three-and-twenty and seven or eight years afterwards my father died. The gap caused by his death, the void of loss and loneliness, was more than filled up by my young children. I had two little girls who, at this time, were a source of perpetual interest to me. How one grows to love the little creatures, with their laughter and tears, their hopes and questions and make-believe! And how one’s love for them is intensified by all the trouble one takes to win their love and by all the plans one weaves for their future! But all this is common human experience and will only bore you. A man’s happiness is not interesting to other people, and I don’t know that much happiness is good for a man himself; at any rate, during the ten or fifteen years in which I was happiest, I did least; made least progress, I mean, as a workman and the least intellectual advance as a man. But when my girls began to grow up and detach themselves from me and the home, my intellectual nature began to stir again. One must have some interests in life, and, if the heart is empty, the head becomes busier, I often think.

“One day I had a notable visit. A man came in to get a pair of spectacles made: a remarkable man. He was young, gay and enthusiastic, with an astonishing flow of words, an astonishing brightness of speech and manner. He seemed to light up the dingy old shop with his vivacity and happy frankness. He wanted spectacles to correct a slight dissimilarity between his right eye and his left, and he had been advised to come to me by Sir William Creighton, as the glasses would have to be particularly well made. I promised to work at them myself, and on that he burst out:

“‘I shall be very curious to see whether perfect eyes help or hurt my art. You know I am a painter,’ he went on, throwing his hair back from his forehead, ‘and each of us painters sees life in his own way, and beauty with certain peculiarities. It would be curious, wouldn’t it? if talent came from a difference between one’s eyes!’

“I smiled at his eagerness, and took down his name, then altogether unknown to me; but soon to become known and memorable above all other names: Dante Gabriel Rossetti. I made the glasses and he was enthusiastic about them, and brought me a little painting of himself by way of gratitude.

“There it is,” said Penry, pointing to a little panel that hung by his bedside; “the likeness of an extraordinary man—a genius, if ever there was one. I don’t know why he took to me, except that I admired him intensely; my shop, too, was near his house in Chelsea, and he used often to drop in and pass an hour in my back parlour and talk—such talk as I had never heard before and have never heard since. His

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

words were food and drink to me, and more than that. Either his thoughts or the magic of his personality supplied my mind with the essence of growth and vigour which had hitherto been lacking to it; in a very real sense, Rossetti became my spiritual father. He taught me things about art that I had never imagined; opened to me a new heaven and a new earth and, above all, showed me that my craft, too, had artistic possibilities in it that I had never dreamed of before.

"I shall never forget the moment when he first planted the seed in me that has since grown and grown till it has filled my life. It was in my parlour behind the shop. He had been talking in his eager, vivid way, pouring out truths and thoughts, epigrams and poetry, as a great jeweller sometimes pours gems from hand to hand. I had sat listening open-mouthed, trying to remember as much as I could, to assimilate some small part of all that word-wealth. He suddenly stopped, and we smoked on for a few minutes in silence; then he broke out again:

"‘Do you know, my solemn friend,’ he said abruptly, ‘that I struck an idea the other day which might suit you. I was reading one of Walter Scott’s novels: that romantic stuff of his amuses me, you know, though it isn’t as deep as the sea. Well, I found out that, about a hundred years ago, a man like you made what they called Claude-glasses. I suppose they were merely rose-tinted,’ he laughed, ‘but at any rate, they were supposed to make everything beautiful in a Claude-like way. Now, why shouldn’t you make such glasses? It would do Englishmen a lot of good to see things rose-tinted for a while. Then, too, you might make Rossetti-glasses,’ he went on laughingly, ‘and, if these dull Saxons could only get a glimpse of the passion that possesses him, it would wake them up, I know. Why not go to work, my friend, at something worth doing? Do you know,’ he continued seriously, ‘there might be something in it. I don’t believe, if I had had your glasses at the beginning, I should ever have been the artist I am. I mean,’ he said, talking half to himself, ‘if my eyes had been all right from the beginning, I might perhaps have been contented with what I saw. But as my eyes were imperfect I tried to see things as my soul saw them, and so invented looks and gestures that the real world could never give.’

"I scarcely understood what he meant," said Mr. Penry, "but his words dwelt with me: the ground had been prepared for them; he had prepared it; and at once they took root in me and began to grow. I could not get the idea of the Claude-glasses and the Rossetti-glasses out of my head, and at last I advertised for a pair of those old Claude-glasses, and in a month or so a pair turned up.

"You may imagine that, while I was waiting, time hung heavy on

my hands. I longed to be at work; I wanted to realise the idea that had come to me while Rossetti was talking. During my acquaintance with him, I had been to his studio a dozen times, and had got to know and admire that type of woman's beauty which is now connected with his name; the woman, I mean, with swanlike throat, languid air and heavy-lidded eyes, who conveys to all of us now something of Rossetti's insatiable desire. But, while I was studying his work and going about steeped in the emotion of it, I noticed one day a lovely girl whom Rossetti could have taken as a model. I had begun, in fact, to see the world as Rossetti saw it; and this talk of his about the Claude-glasses put the idea into my head that I might, indeed, be able to make a pair of spectacles which would enable people to see the world as Rossetti saw it and as I saw it when Rossetti's influence had entire possession of me. This would be a great deal easier to do, I said to myself, than to make a pair of Claude-glasses; for, after all, I did not know what Claude's eyes were really like and I did know the peculiarity of Rossetti's eyes. I accordingly began to study the disparate quality in Rossetti's eyes and, after making a pair of spectacles that made my eyes see unequally to the same degree, I found that the Rossettian vision of things was sharpened and intensified to me. From that moment on, my task was easy. I had only to study any given pair of eyes and then to alter them so that they possessed the disparity of Rossetti's eyes and the work was half done. I found, too, that I could increase this disparity a little and, in proportion as I increased it, I increased also the peculiarity of what I called the Rossettian view of things; but, if I made the disparity too great, everything became blurred again.

"My researches had reached this point, when the pair of old Claude-glasses came into my hands. I saw at a glance that the optician of the eighteenth century had no knowledge of my work. He had contented himself, as Rossetti had guessed, with colouring the glasses very delicately and in several tints; in fact, he had studied the colour peculiarities of the eye as I had studied its form-peculiarities. With this hint, I completed my work. It took me only a few days to learn that Rossetti's view of colour was just as limited, or, I should say, just as peculiar, as his view of form; and, when I once understood the peculiarities of his colour-sight, I could reproduce them as easily as I could reproduce the peculiarities of his vision of form. I then set to work to get both these peculiarities into half-a-dozen different sets of glasses.

"The work took me some six or eight months; and, when I had done my best, I sent a little note round to Rossetti and awaited his coming with painful eagerness, hope and fear swaying me in turn. When he came, I gave him a pair of the spectacles; and, when he put

them on and looked out into the street, I watched him. He was surprised—that I could see—and more than a little puzzled. While he sat thinking, I explained to him what the old Claude-glasses were like and how I had developed his suggestion into this present discovery.

“‘You are an artist, my friend,’ he cried at last, ‘and a new kind of artist. If you can make people see the world as Claude saw it and as I see it, you can go on to make them see it as Rembrandt saw it and Velasquez. You can make the dullards understand life as the greatest have understood it. But that is impossible,’ he added, his face falling: ‘that is only a dream. You have got my real eyes, therefore you can force others to see as I see; but you have not the real eyes of Rembrandt, or Velasquez, or Titian; you have not the physical key to the souls of the great masters of the past; and so your work can only apply to the present and to the future. But that is enough, and more than enough,’ he added quickly. ‘Go on: there are Whistler’s eyes to get; and Corot’s in France, and half-a-dozen others; and glad I shall be to put you on the scent. You will do wonderful things, my friend, wonderful things.’

“I was mightily uplifted by his praise and heart-glad, too, in my own way; but resolved at the same time not to give up the idea of making Velasquez-glasses and Rembrandt-glasses; for I had come to know and to admire these masters through Rossetti’s talk. He was always referring to them, quoting them, so to say; and, for a long time past, I had accustomed myself to spend a couple of afternoons each week in our National Gallery, in order to get some knowledge of the men who were the companions of his spirit.

“For nearly a year after this, I spent every hour of my spare time studying in the National; and at last it seemed to me that I had got Titian’s range of colour quite as exactly as the old glasses had got Claude’s. But it was extraordinarily difficult to get his vision of form. However, I was determined to succeed; and, with infinite patience and after numberless attempts, success began slowly to come to me. To cut a long story short, I was able, in eight or ten years, to construct these four or five different sorts of glasses. Claude-glasses and Rossetti-glasses, of course; and also Titian-glasses, Velasquez-glasses and Rembrandt-glasses; and again my mind came to anchor in the work accomplished. Not that I stopped thinking altogether; but that for some time my thoughts took no new flight, but hovered round and about the known. As soon as I had made the first pair of Rossetti-glasses, I began to teach my assistant, Williams, how to make them too, in order to put them before the public. We soon got a large sale for them. Chelsea, you know—old Chelsea, I mean—is almost peopled

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

with artists, and many of them came about me and began to make my shop a rendezvous, where they met and brought their friends and talked; for Rossetti had a certain following, even in his own lifetime. But my real success came with the Titian-glasses. The great Venetian's romantic view of life and beauty seemed to exercise an irresistible seduction upon everyone, and the trade in his glasses soon became important.

"My home life at this time was not as happy as it had been. In those long years of endless experiment, my daughters had grown up and married, and my wife, I suppose, widowed of her children, wanted more of my time and attention, just when I was taken away by my new work and began to give her less. She used to complain at first; but, when she saw that complaints did not alter me, she retired into herself, as it were; and I saw less and less of her. And then, when my work was done and my new trade established, my shop, as I have told you, became the rendezvous for artists, and I grew interested in the frank, bright faces and the youthful, eager voices, and renewed my youth in the company of the young painters and writers who used to seek me out. Suddenly, I awoke to the fact that my wife was ill, very ill, and, almost before I had fully realised how weak she was, she died. The loss was greater than I would have believed possible. She was gentle and kind, and I missed her every day and every hour. I think that was the beginning of my dislike for the shop, the shop that had made me neglect her. The associations of it reminded me of my fault; the daily requirements of it grew irksome to me.

"About this time, too, I began to miss Rossetti and the vivifying influences of his mind and talk. He went into the country a great deal and for long periods I did not see him, and, when at length we met, I found that the virtue was going out of him: he had become moody and irritable, a neuropath. Of course, the intellectual richness in him could not be hidden altogether: now and then, he would break out and talk in the old magical way:

And conjure wonder out of emptiness,  
Till mean things put on beauty like a dress  
And all the world was an enchanted place.

But, more often, he was gloomy and harassed, and it saddened and oppressed me to meet him. The young artists who came to my shop did not fill his place; they chattered gaily enough, but none of them was a magician as he had been, and I began to realise that genius such as his is one of the rarest gifts in the world.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“I am trying, with all brevity, to explain to you the causes of my melancholy and my dissatisfaction: but I don’t think I have done it very convincingly; and yet, about this time, I had grown dissatisfied, ill at ease, restless. And once again my heart-emptiness drove me to work and think. The next step forward came inevitably from the last one I had taken.

“While studying the great painters, I had begun to notice that there was a certain quality common to all of them, a certain power they all possessed when working at highest pressure: the power of seeing things as they are—the vital and essential truth of things. I don’t mean to say that all of them possessed this faculty to the same degree. Far from it. The truth of things to Titian is overlaid with romance: he is memorable mainly for his magic of colour and beauty; while Holbein is just as memorable for his grasp of reality. But compare Titian with Giorgione or Tintoretto, and you will see that his apprehension of the reality of things is much greater than theirs. It is that which distinguishes him from the other great colourists of Venice. And, as my own view of life grew sadder and clearer, it came to me gradually as a purpose that I should try to make glasses that would show the reality, the essential truth of things, as all the great masters had seen it; and so I set to work again on a new quest.

“About this time, I found out that, though I had many more customers in my shop, I had not made money out of my artistic enterprises. My old trade as a spectacle-maker was really the most profitable branch of my business. The sale of the Rossetti-glasses and the Titian-glasses, which at first had been very great, fell off quickly as the novelty passed away, and it was soon apparent that I had lost more than I had gained by my artistic inventions. But whether I made £1,500 a year, or £1,000 a year, was a matter of indifference to me. I had doubled that cape of forty which to me marks the end of youth in a man, and my desires were shrinking as my years increased. As long as I had enough to satisfy my wants, I was not greedy of money.

“This new-born desire of mine to make glasses which would show the vital truth of things soon began to possess me; and, gradually, I left the shop to take care of itself, left it in the hands of my assistant, Williams, and spent more and more time in the little workshop at the back, which had been the theatre of all my achievements. I could not tell you how long I worked at the problem; I only know that it cost me years and years, and that, as I gave more time and labour to it and more and more of the passion of my soul, so I came to love it more intensely and to think less of the ordinary business of life. At length, I began to live in a sort of dream, possessed by the one purpose. I

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

used to get up at night and go on with the work and rest in the day. For months together, I scarcely ate anything, in the hope that hunger might sharpen my faculties; at another time, I lived almost wholly on coffee, hoping that this would have the same effect; and, at length, bit by bit, and slowly, I got nearer to the goal of my desire. But, when I reached it, when I had constructed glasses that would reveal the naked truth, show things as they are and men and women as they are, I found that circumstances about me had changed lamentably.

“In the midst of my work, I had known without realising it that Williams had left me and started a shop opposite, with the object of selling the artistic glasses, of which he declared himself the inventor; but I paid no attention to this at the time, and when, two or three years afterwards, I woke again to the ordinary facts of life, I found that my business had almost deserted me. I am not sure, but I think it was a notice to pay some debt which I hadn’t the money to pay, that first recalled me completely to the realities of everyday life. What irony there is in the world! Here was I, who had been labouring for years and years with the one object of making men see things as they are and men and women as they are, persecuted now and undone by the same reality which I was trying to reveal.

“My latest invention, too, was a commercial failure: the new glasses did not sell at all. Nine people out of ten in England are truth-blind, and could make nothing of the glasses; and the small minority, who have the sense of real things, kept complaining that the view of life which my glasses showed them, was not pleasant: as if that were any fault of mine. Williams, too, my former assistant, did me a great deal of harm. He devoted himself merely to selling my spectacles; and the tradesman succeeded where the artist and thinker starved. As soon as he found out what my new glasses were, he began to treat me contemptuously; talked of me at times as a sort of half-madman, whose brain was turned by the importance given to his inventions, and at other times declared that I had never invented anything at all, for the idea of the artistic glasses had been suggested by Rossetti. The young painters who frequented his shop took pleasure in spreading this legend and attributing to Rossetti what Rossetti would have been the first to disclaim. I found myself abandoned, and hours used to pass without anyone coming into my shop. The worst of it was that, when chance gave me a customer, I soon lost him: the new glasses pleased no one.

“At this point, I suppose, if I had been gifted with ordinary prudence, I should have begun to retrace my steps; but either we grow more obstinate as we grow older, or else the soul’s passion grows by



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

the sacrifices we make for it. Whatever the motives of my obstinacy may have been, the disappointment, the humiliation I went through seemed only to nerve me to a higher resolution. I knew I had done good work, and the disdain shown to me drove me in upon myself and my own thoughts."

\* \* \*

So much I learned from Mr. Penry in the first few days of our acquaintance, and then for weeks and weeks he did not tell me any more. He seemed to regard the rest of his story as too fantastic and improbable for belief, and he was nervously apprehensive lest he should turn me against him by telling it. Again and again, however, he hinted at further knowledge, more difficult experiments, a more arduous seeking, till my curiosity was all aflame, and I pressed him, perhaps unduly, for the whole truth.

In those weeks of constant companionship, our friendship had grown with almost every meeting. It was impossible to escape the charm of Penry's personality! He was so absorbed in his work, so heedless of the ordinary vanities and greeds of men, so simple and kindly and sympathetic, that I grew to love him. He had his little faults, of course, his little peculiarities; surface irritabilities of temper; moments of undue depression, in which he depreciated himself and his work; moments of undue elation, in which he over-estimated the importance of what he had done. He would have struck most people as a little flighty and uncertain, I think; but his passionate devotion to his work lifted the soul and his faults were, after all, insignificant in comparison with his noble and rare qualities. I had met no one in life who aroused the higher impulses in me as he did. It seemed probable that his latest experiments would be the most daring and the most instructive, and, accordingly, I pressed him to tell me about them with some insistence, and, after a time, he consented:

"I don't know how it came about," he began, "but the contempt of men for my researches exercised a certain influence on me, and at length I took myself seriously to task: was there any reason for their disdain and dislike? Did these glasses of mine really show things as they are, or was I offering but a new caricature of truth, which people were justified in rejecting as unpleasant? I took up again my books on optics and studied the whole subject anew from the beginning. Even as I worked, a fear grew upon me: I felt that there was another height before me to climb, and that the last bit of road would probably be the steepest of all. . . . In the Gospels," he went on, in a low, reverent

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

voice, “many things are symbolic and of universal application, and it always seemed to me significant that the Hill of Calvary came at the end of the long journey. I shrank from another prolonged effort; I said to myself I couldn’t face another task like the last. But, all the while, I had a sort of uncomfortable prescience that the hardest part of my life’s work lay before me.

“One day, a casual statement stirred me profoundly. The primary colours, you know, are red, yellow and blue. The colours shown in the rainbow vary from red to blue and violet; and the vibrations, or lengths, of the light-waves that give us violet grow shorter and shorter and, at length, give us red. These vibrations can be measured. One day, quite by chance, I came across the statement that there were innumerable light-waves longer than those which give violet. At once the question sprang: were these longer waves represented by colours which we don’t see, colours for which we have no name, colours of which we can form no conception? And was the same thing true of the waves which, growing shorter and shorter, give us the sensation of red? There is room, of course, for myriads of colours beyond this other extremity of our vision. A little study convinced me that my guess was right; for all the colours which we see are represented to our sense of feeling in degrees of heat: that is, blue shows one reading on the thermometer and red a higher reading; and, by means of this new standard, I discovered that man’s range of vision is not even placed in the middle of the register of heat, but occupies a little space far up towards the warmer extremity of it. There are thousands of degrees of cold lower than blue and hundreds of degrees of heat above red. All these gradations are doubtless represented by colours which no human eye can perceive, no human mind imagine. It is with sight as with hearing. There are noises louder than thunder which we cannot hear, the roar that lies on the other side of silence. We men are poor restless prisoners, hemmed in by our senses as by the walls of a cell, hearing only a part of nature’s orchestra and that part imperfectly; seeing only a thousandth part of the colour marvels about us and seeing that infinitesimal part incorrectly and partially. Here was new knowledge with a vengeance! Knowledge that altered all my work! How was I to make glasses to show all this? Glasses that would reveal things as they are and must be to higher beings—the ultimate reality. At once, the new quest became the object of my life, and, somehow or other I knew before I began the work that the little scraps of comfort or of happiness which I had preserved up to this time, I should now forfeit. I realised with shrinking and fear, that this new enquiry would still further remove me from the sympathy of my

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

fellows.

"My prevision was justified. I had hardly got well to work—that is, I had only spent a couple of years in vain and torturing experiments—when I was one day arrested for debt. I had paid no attention to the writ; the day of trial came and went without my knowing anything about it; and there was a man in possession of my few belongings before I understood what was going on. Then I was taught by experience that to owe money is the one unforgivable sin in the nation of shopkeepers. My goods were sold up and I was brought to utter destitution"—the old man paused—"and then sent to prison because I could not pay."

"But," I asked, "did your daughters do nothing? Surely, they could have come to your help!"

"Oh! they were more than kind," he replied simply, "the eldest especially, perhaps because she was childless herself. I called her Gabrielle," he added, lingering over the name; "she was very good to me. As soon as she heard the news, she paid my debt and set me free. She bought things, too, and fitted out two nice rooms for me and arranged everything again quite comfortably; but you see," he went on with a timid, deprecating smile, "I tired out even her patience: I could not work at anything that brought in money and I was continually spending money for my researches. The nice furniture went first; the pretty tables and chairs and then the bed. I should have wearied an angel. Again and again Gabrielle bought me furniture and made me tidy and comfortable, as she said, and again and again, like a spendthrift boy, I threw it all away. How could I think of tables and chairs, when I was giving my life to my work? Besides, I always felt that the more I was plagued and punished, the more certain I was to get out the best in me: solitude and want are the twin nurses of the soul."

"But didn't you wish to get any recognition, any praise?" I broke in.

"I knew by this time," he answered, "that, in proportion as my work was excellent, I should find fewer to understand it. How many had I seen come to praise and honour while Rossetti fell to nerve-disease and madness; and yet his work endures and will endure, while theirs is already forgotten. The tree that grows to a great height wins to solitude even in a forest: its highest outshoots find no companions save the winds and stars. I tried to console myself with such similes as this," he went on, with a deprecatory smile, "for the years passed and I seemed to come no nearer to success. At last, the way opened for me a little, and, after eight or ten years of incessant experiment, I found that partial success was all I should ever accomplish. Listen!

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

There is not one pair of eyes in a million that could ever see what I had taught myself to see, for the passion of the soul brings with it its own reward. After caring for nothing but truth for twenty years, thinking of nothing but truth, and wearying after it, I could see it more clearly than other men: get closer to it than they could. So the best part of my labour—I mean the highest result of it—became personal, entirely personal, and this disappointed me. If I could do no good to others by it, what was my labour but a selfish gratification? And what was that to me—at my age! I seemed to lose heart, to lose zest. . . . Perhaps it was that old age had come upon me, that the original sum of energy in me had been spent, that my bolt was shot. It may be so.

“The fact remains that I lost the desire to go on, and, when I had lost that, I woke up, of course, to the ordinary facts of life once again. I had no money; I was weak from semi-starvation and long vigils, prematurely old and decrepit. Once more, Gabrielle came to my assistance. She fitted up this room, and then I went out to sell my glasses, as a pedlar. I bought the tray and made specimens of all the spectacles I had made, and hawked them about the streets. Why shouldn’t I? No work is degrading to the spirit, none, and I could not be a burden to the one I loved, now I knew that my best efforts would not benefit others. I did not get along well: the world seemed strange to me, and men a little rough and hard. Besides, the police seemed to hate me; I don’t know why. Perhaps, because I was poor, and yet unlike the poor they knew. They persecuted me, and the magistrates before whom they brought me always believed them and never believed me. I have been punished times without number for obstruction, though I never annoyed anyone. The police never pretended that I had cheated or stolen from anyone before; but, after all, this latest charge of theirs brought me to know you and gave me your friendship; and so I feel that all the shame has been more than made up to me.”

My heart burned within me as he spoke so gently of his unmerited sufferings. I told him I was proud of being able to help him. He put his hand on mine with a little smile of comprehension.

A day or two later curiosity awoke in me again, and I asked him to let me see a pair of the new glasses, those that show the ultimate truth of things.

“Perhaps, some day,” he answered quietly. I suppose my face fell, for, after a while, he went on meditatively: “There are faults in them, you see, shortcomings and faults in you, too, my friend. Believe me, if I were sure that they would cheer or help you in life, I would let you use them quickly enough; but I am beginning to doubt their efficacy.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Perhaps the truth of things is not for man."

\* \* \*

When we entered the court on the day of Penry's trial, Morris and myself were of opinion that the case would not last long and that it would certainly be decided in our favour. The only person who seemed at all doubtful of the issue was Penry himself. He smiled at me, half pityingly, when I told him that in an hour we should be on our way home. The waiting seemed interminable, but at length the case was called. The counsel for the prosecution got up and talked perfunctorily for five minutes, with a sort of careless unconcern that seemed to me callous and unfeeling. Then he began to call his witnesses. The workman, I noticed, was not in the court. His evidence had been rather in favour of the accused, and the prosecution, on that account, left it out. But Mr. 'Allett, as he called himself, of 'igh 'Olborn, was even more voluble and vindictive than he had been at the police-court. He had had time to strengthen his evidence, too, to make it more bitter and more telling, and he had used his leisure malignantly. It seemed to me that everyone should have seen his spite and understood the vileness of his motives. But no; again and again, the judge emphasised those parts of his story which seemed to tell most against the accused. The judge was evidently determined that the jury should not miss any detail of the accusation, and his bias appeared to me iniquitous. But there was a worse surprise in store for us. After Hallett, the prosecution called a canon of Westminster, a stout man, with heavy jowl and loose, suasive lips, Canon Bayton. He told us how he had grown interested in Penry and in his work, and how he had bought all his earlier glasses, the Rossetti-glasses, as he called them. The canon declared that these artistic glasses threw a very valuable light on things, redeemed the coarseness and commonness of life and made reality beautiful and charming. He was not afraid to say that he regarded them as instruments for good; but the truth-revealing glasses seemed to excite his utmost hatred and indignation. He could not find a good word to say for them: they only showed, he said, what was terrible and brutal in life. When looking through them, all beauty vanished, the charming flesh-covering fell away and you saw the death's-head grinning at you. Instead of parental affection, you found personal vanity; instead of the tenderness of the husband for the wife, gross and common sensuality. All high motives withered, and, instead of the flowers of life, you were compelled to look at the wormlike roots and the clinging dirt. He concluded his

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

evidence by assuring the jury that they would be doing a good thing if they put an end to the sale of such glasses. The commerce was worse than fraudulent, he declared; it was a blasphemy against God and an outrage on human nature. The unctuous canon seemed to me worse than all the rest; but the effect he had on the jury was unmistakable, and our barrister, Symonds, refused to cross-examine him. To do so, he said, would only strengthen the case for the prosecution, and I have no doubt that he was right, for Morris agreed with him.

But even the prosecuting witnesses did not hurt us more than the witnesses for the defence. Mr. Penry had been advised by Mr. Morris to call witnesses to his character, and he had called half-a-dozen of the most respectable tradesmen of his acquaintance. One and all did him harm rather than good; they all spoke of having known him twenty years before, when he was well-to-do and respectable. They laid stress upon what they called his "fall in life." They all seemed to think that he had neglected his business and come to ruin by his own fault. No one of them had the faintest understanding of the man, or of his work. It was manifest from the beginning that these witnesses damaged our case, and this was apparently the view of the prosecuting barrister, for he scarcely took the trouble to cross-examine them.

It was with a sigh of relief that I saw Mr. Penry go into the box to give evidence on his own behalf. Now, I thought, the truth will come to light. He stated everything with the utmost clearness and precision; but no one seemed to believe him. The wish to understand him was manifestly wanting in the jury, and from the beginning the judge took sides against him. From time to time, he interrupted him just to bring out what he regarded as the manifest falseness of his testimony.

"You say that these glasses show truth," he said. "Who wants to see truth?"

"Very few," was Penry's reply.

"Why, then, did you make the glasses," went on the judge, "if you knew that they would disappoint people?"

"I thought it my duty to," replied Penry.

"Your duty to disappoint and anger people?" retorted the judge; "a strange view to take of duty. And you got money for this unpleasant duty, didn't you?"

"A little," was Penry's reply.

"Yes; but still you got money," persisted the judge. "You persuaded people to buy your glasses, knowing that they would be disappointed in them, and you induced them to give you money for the disappointment. Have you anything else to urge in your defence?"

I was at my wit's end; I scarcely knew how to keep quiet in my

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

seat. It seemed to me so easy to see the truth. But even Penry appeared indifferent to the result, indifferent to a degree that I could scarcely explain or excuse. This last question, however, of the judge aroused him. As the harsh, contemptuous words fell upon the ear, he leaned forward, and, selecting a pair of spectacles, put them on and peered round the court. I noticed that he was slightly flushed. In a moment or two, he took the glasses off and turned to the judge:

"My lord," he said, "you seem determined to condemn me, but, if you do condemn me, I want you to do it with some understanding of the facts. I have told you that there are very few persons in this country who have any faculty for truth, and that the few who have, usually have ruined their power before they reach manhood. You scoff and sneer at what I say, but still it remains the simple truth. I looked round the court just now to see if there was anyone here young enough, ingenuous enough, honest enough, to give evidence on my behalf. I find that there is no one in the court to whom I can appeal with any hope of success. But, my lord, in the room behind this court there is a child sitting, a girl with fair hair, probably your lordship's daughter. Allow me to call her as a witness, allow her to test the glasses and say what she sees through them, and then you will find that these glasses do alter and change things in a surprising way to those who can use them."

"I don't know how you knew it," broke in the judge, "but my daughter is in my room waiting for me, and what you say seems to have some sense in it. But it is quite unusual to call a child, and I don't know that I have any right to allow it. Still, I don't want you to feel that you have not had every opportunity of clearing yourself; therefore, if the jury consent, I am quite willing that they should hear what this new witness may have to say."

"We are willing to hear the witness," said the foreman, "but really, your lordship, our minds are made up about the case."

The next moment, the child came into the court—a girl of thirteen or fourteen, with a bright, intelligent face, a sort of shy fear troubling the directness of her approach.

"I want you to look through a pair of spectacles, my child," said Penry to her, "and tell us just what you see through them," and, as he spoke, he peered at her in his strange way, as if judging her eyes.

He then selected a pair of glasses and handed them to her. The child put them on and looked round the court, and then cried out suddenly:

"Oh, what strange people; and how ugly they all are. All ugly, except you who gave me the glasses; you are beautiful." Turning hastily

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

round, she looked at her father and added, "Oh, papa, you are—Oh!" and she took off the glasses quickly, while a burning flush spread over her face.

"I don't like those glasses," she said indignantly, laying them down. "They are horrid! My father doesn't look like that."

"My child," said Penry, very gently, "will you look through another pair of glasses? You see so much that perhaps you can see what is to be, as well as what is. Perhaps you can catch some glimpse even of the future."

He selected another pair and handed them to the child. There was a hush of expectancy in the court; people who had scoffed at Penry before and smiled contempt, now leaned forward to hear, as if something extraordinary were about to happen. All eyes were riveted on the little girl's face; all ears strained to hear what she would say. Round and round the court she looked through the strange glasses and then began to speak in a sort of frightened monotone:

"I see nothing," she said. "I mean there is no court and no people, only great white blocks, a sort of bluey-white powdered as with sugar. Is it ice? There are no trees, no animals; all is cold and white. It is ice. There is no living creature, no grass, no flowers, nothing moves. It is all cold, all dead." In a frightened voice she added: "Is that the future of the world?"

Penry leaned towards her eagerly:

"Look at the light, child," he said; "follow the light up and tell us what you see."

Again a strange hush; I heard my heart thumping while the child looked about her. Then, pulling off the glasses, she said peevishly:

"I can't see anything more: the light hurts my eyes."

\* \* \*

## DEATH IN PRISON

"Matthew Penry, whose trial for fraud and condemnation will probably still be remembered by our readers because of the very impressive evidence for the prosecution given by Canon Bayton, of Westminster, died, we understand, in Wandsworth Prison yesterday morning from syncope."—Extract from the Times, January 3rd, 1900.



A FRENCH ARTIST

*Published in the collection The Veils of Isis (1915)*

ONE night after dining with Henri Dartier, the critic and writer who has done so much to make modern English literature comprehensible to Frenchmen, we went into Pousset's *brasserie*, where from time to time one can meet most of the leaders of French thought.

Presently a pair came into the room who drew all eyes. The man was like a high priest, with black hair and long, silky black beard, regular features and pallid skin. As he came nearer the impression deepened; he was a very handsome man of about thirty-five, the great, dark eyes were superb and there was a pontifical majesty in the portly dignified figure. He dressed the part, too; he wore no collar, or rather the collar was a band of black *moiré* silk which seemed to form part of his waistcoat—not a spot of color about him—a study in black and white, for the black clothes set off the pallor of his skin. Beside him a tiny girl's figure, her head reaching hardly to his chin, her pale, gold hair was banded round her ears, framing her face, sharpening the thin oval of it, and accentuating the rather peaked, prominent nose, the red mouth, and small, bony chin. Her eyes held one—large, gray-blue eyes, enigmatic—emptied of expression. She might have stepped out of a canvas of Botticelli—an immature virgin, full of character by some primitive master. The contrast between the two was so astounding—the individualities of both so marked and so uncommon, that I turned eagerly to Dartier, who knows every one, to learn about them.

"Yes, I know them," he replied to my question; "he is from Provence, an artist, Piranello: the girl's his wife."

"His wife," I cried, "she might be his daughter."

Dartier shrugged his shoulders.

"She is older than you think."

"I should like to know them," I remarked.

"Nothing easier," was his reply, and he got up and called out, "Piranello, *mon ami!*"

A nearer acquaintance only sharpened my curiosity. Piranello was to me a new type; there was something of the pontiff not only in his looks, but in his nature; in his unaffected seriousness, in the slow gestures of his long, white fingers; something hieratic in his dignity and repose, a consciousness of individual worth, that would have been pomposity in any one less simple and sincere.

And his wife, Claire, was just as singular a personality. She talked very little; was very quiet; her extraordinary self-repression was in itself

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

a distinction, yet each of her words counted, and if a good thing was said, or anything to excite her, any cry of passion or of revolt, the thin nostrils would vibrate, the eyes darken, and the whole face sharpen to intensity. . . .

Piranello was very courteous. In answer to the questions of Dartier, he said he had done no painting lately, but was interested in enamels and mosaics.

"The beginnings of half a dozen arts," he remarked, "or the culminating points, whichever you like. I have been busy, too, with some new jewelry," and his long, white fingers waved toward an ornament on the blue of his wife's dress. It was an imitation of an open oyster-shell, with a great pink pearl in the cup and a tiny black one at the side. Madame Piranello detached it from her dress without a word, and handed it to me. I could not help exclaiming with admiration; it was an astonishing copy in some metal or other and curiously enameled; the outside as rough as any oyster-shell, while the inside had a milky radiance, shot through with faint colors, like the most lovely mother-of-pearl, a perfect setting for the great gem. It would have been hard to find a more effective or extraordinary piece of jewelry.

"Jewelry should be barbaric," Piranello said, "the gem is the subject; the artist must set it to show off its beauty, its strangeness, its individuality. It is what an incident of real life is to the story-teller; he should only use it if it suits him, if he can make it significant—beautiful or terrible. Two or three diamonds side by side in a ring; a whole row of pearls cheek by jowl in a necklace, are merely symbols of vanity and wealth—evidence of vulgar bad taste. The pearls are selected because of their likeness one to another; whereas the charm of pearls, as of everything else, is in their unlikeness to each other. That is why I put my tiny black pearl there, to set off the exquisite pink glow of the master-gem . . ."

The man interested me, and the woman had a certain attraction; I was glad when, in answer to a request by Dartier, Piranello invited me to visit his studio.

"I have got my forge," he said, "just off the Rue Ramey, away up beyond the Butte de Montmartre, where one is hidden from the hive, and Claire has made an interesting room or two, which you may care to see . . ."

When we parted for the night I asked Dartier about him.

"You will see for yourself," he said. "Piranello has a real talent. He made a name ten years ago in Paris by painting girls like the *Primitives*, and old men like *Balzac*. Perhaps because his pictures affected us a good deal we used to call them the wicked virgins and wise saints:

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

we Parisians always mock our emotions. You will see for yourself next Wednesday.”

On Wednesday I drove up to the Butte, and then got down and walked nearly to the fortifications along the slope of the hill turned away from Paris. There in a waste place I found the artist's house and studio. The house was the ordinary French suburban box, and from the outside seemed absolutely commonplace. But the door opened into a great vaulted room, like the refectory of some old, convent. A staircase at the far end led to the upper part of the house. Beyond it I was told was the tiny kitchen. Between the arches of the vaulted room were paintings of primitives done on panels, and here and there primitive statues of saints in stone and marble. The furniture was all early renaissance; the whole room of the time of Henry II.

The little lady who came to meet me belonged to the same period. Claire seemed a little angular, a little stiff, just as the Gothic saints seemed a little stiff, because of the pointed folds of their drapery.

Piranello, she said, was in his studio. Would we care to look at the room first; we did care. It was a feast to the eye. Not many things in it, but everything chosen with unerring knowledge and taste. Here was a St. Rocque, standing with compassionate hands outspread over a lady who was ministering to his wound—an atmosphere of human pity and suffering about the group which gripped the heart. On the other side of the white vault a St. Louis in the same hard, gray stone with the cross on his breast and the *fleur-de-lis* of France on his raiment, the two fingers of the right hand uplifted in a gesture of admonition. Next to him a triptych of some early Florentine painter, noteworthy for the suave beauty of the faces, and for a page whose right hand was toying with a jeweled dagger while he waited on the Virgin.

Over the door by which I had entered was a window of renaissance glass, which threw gules of crimson and primrose on the narrow oaken table. On the table itself a vase of alabaster with one yellow rose in it. The simplicity and unity of effect made a singular appeal.

The little lady led me out by a side door under the stairs, and we found ourselves at once in the studio, where Piranello was at work. The studio was evidently built on for the sake of the light from above, which could be shaded at will with heavy, dark curtains. It was paved like the room we had just left with great slabs of stone, and at one end stood a huge forge, with immense bellows, which a little boy was working. Piranello came to meet us in an old blue blouse, all stained with blotches of paint and ochred by many scorchings. He had been working at a crucifix. The conception was ingenious. An enormous cliff-like hill of some rough metal represented the calvary, with forests,

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

lakes, and footpaths of a dozen colors, and toiling up the hill little figures of men and women of every race and every variety of costume. On the top the wooden cross all empty, with gouts and clots of blood on the nails and arms, and at the foot a woman prostrate—sorrow in every line of the broken figure.

“I never care to attempt the figure of the ‘Crucified One,’” said Piranello quietly, “it is the cross itself which is of such significance—the instrument of torture and death, turned into a symbol of faith and hope.”

\* \* \*

It is curious when you come to know some one who is a person—age how astonished you are afterward by the amount of talk that goes on about him. I had never heard of Piranello or his wife before, but after visiting them I seemed to hear of them on all sides. Some people declared that it was his wife and her strange beauty which had given him all his talent. But when you talked of the heads of his old men, modeled with extraordinary realism and understanding—heads weird and tortured and inspired—the critics shrugged their shoulders and thrust forth their lips contemptuously. Their malevolence did not weaken the impression made upon me by the artist and his wife.

In time I got to know Piranello rather well. The question of his wife’s importance to his art interested me excessively. One day he showed me a wonderful picture done some years before of “Susanna and the Elders,” in which his wife’s girlish beauty was exposed with extraordinary realism and emotion, while lust itself was incarnate in the vicious masks of the peeping old men.

“You have been extraordinarily fortunate in your wife as a model,” I exclaimed, “an ideal figure, is she not?” for indeed the unveiled charm of her adolescence redeemed the whole scene.

Unconscious of what was passing through my mind, Piranello remarked casually:

“A good model: art begins in imitation, but it must become interpretation before it’s worth much.”

“Her figure is not only lovely,” I went on, “but just what you wanted here to lift the portraits of those ignoble old beasts to the plane of great art—a wonderful model! How lucky you were to find her.”

I had roused him at last.

“Not lucky,” he said; “luck had nothing to do with it. We artists have always our models in our heads. I’ll explain if you like. Quite early I was taken by the primitive masters; I suppose their sincerity,

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

naïvete and frankness appealed to me—the more complicated we are, the more simplicity moves us. Then I went to northern Italy, and studied the beginnings of painting, as I might have gone to Flanders, or indeed to Russia. Do you know that the Russian school of painting dates from the early part of the fifteenth century? I could show you a picture of a Russian primitive which you would mistake for an Italian. I went to Orvieto and Ravenna and spent three weeks there: I learned a great deal from Signorelli; the astounding vigor, directness and force in him and in other early masters affected me with pleasure as poignant as pain. . . .

“Gradually I began to find myself. The passion in me gave me an ideal of girlhood, and I began to see what I wanted. . . . But I had no formula, you understand, no symbol. I began doing girls’ portraits ingenuously, catching a glimpse of innocence here, and there—the dawning of a child’s soul. Bit by bit the surprising richness of life revealed itself to me, and I began seeking, seeking, and as soon as I began to seek with faith I began to find on this hand and on that, models with the features and figures I wanted for this or that effect. Gradually my own desires grew definite and distinct and then I met my wife. . . . Was she sent to me, or did my desire call her out of the crowd? She affected me like a piece of music heard in some previous existence, my whole soul was poured out like water at her feet. I was all one hunger and thirst for her, and she cared for me as well. . . . Of course her dress was all wrong, and her hair stupid—modern; she had been trying to make her face pretty like every one’s face, like the face of a fashion plate. I showed her what her face really was, the distinction of it, and what her figure was and the subtle, superlative attraction of it. . . . She seized on the idea, womanlike, and as soon as she dressed as I wished, and saw the sensation she created when she went abroad, she developed the idea with great talent. She’s very fine . . . .”

“That explains part of your work, but it does not explain the other side of your talent—your men’s heads. . . .”

“The interest of a man’s face,” he said, “is all of the intellect, spiritual, while the woman’s is all of the body; the ideal of the one is passion and suffering; the ideal of the other grace and innocence. I love a man’s head when it is worn hard by intense feeling and furrowed by thought. I love the mask of the fowl bird of prey with the fat Jew nose, greedy, coarse mouth, and obscene vulture neck. I love the broad face of the lion, with the square jaw, low forehead, heavy brows: courage, cruelty, hate, stamped all over it: or the narrow mask of avarice with its thin lips and pointed teeth: the smile of conscious power and the

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

clawlike, grasping fingers. Oh, I come across superb men's heads everywhere. But strange to say, it is life which supplies me with all my ideals of men: the models themselves suggest the artistic treatment, indicate the heightening touches, whereas with the girls' faces and figures the idea is always within me, suggested by desire. . . . I don't know which is the more effective artistically: probably my girls are truer, deeper than my men. They have less of life in them, and more of ideal beauty: sometimes I think it is the ideal that endures, and sometimes life and the sense of life, but I don't know—no one knows

. . . .

"I am still seeking, seeking, but I have got out on a by-path, I'm afraid. My first impulse seems to be exhausted. . . . I don't mean that," he added quickly. "I mean that it is accomplished in some sort. I think of going to Belgium and Holland. I want fecundating. All this cursed enamel work is not my true work, but it has taught me new combinations of colors—new iridescent effects. I am getting ripe for a new start. . . ."

I could not help wondering whether the woman had come to the same point. Madame Piranello was more secretive, or was it modest reticence? Still, now and then she let drop a word which was significant.

On one occasion, I remember, I asked them to lunch at a Paris restaurant. The fashion of the moment had given women a sheath-like dress of great simplicity. The fashion could easily be approximated to the style of the Primitives, and Madame Piranello had brought about the combination dexterously. Her figure could not help but be slight, yet there was a suggestion of round litheness about it which was very seductive.

"I am so sorry," she said, "that we are late, but the Master did not like my dress: it does not fall in pointed Gothic angles. Artists," she added, with her eyes upon mine, "are slow to admit that their ideals may develop and girls become women. . . ."

There had evidently been a dispute between them on the subject, for Piranello took her up quickly.

"That's not the point," he exclaimed, "there's an ideal in every one, and your ideal is not of the woman-mother. You confuse all one's ideas of the fitness of dress, and—"

"And the result is perfection," I broke in hastily, to clear the air: but though Madame Piranello had remained silent she had not changed her opinion. Her eyes had grown dark, like violets in water, and the little nostrils beat quickly: yet she was wise enough to meet rebuke with silence.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

\* \* \*

A year or so later I met them at Fontainebleau, and found that the paths had diverged a great deal further. While his wife prepared afternoon tea we talked in the garden. He was now full of Memling, and the Van Eycks and Matsys:

"You have no idea the great things I found," he cried; "I shall go back to Flanders for a year. They have given me a dozen ideas. I am working at a gaudy, great picture now. Adam and Eve leaving the garden—of course of their own free will," and he laughed. "Eve is sorrowing at the loss of the accustomed, and fearful; but Adam is delighted with the sovereignty of the larger world—his eyes aglow with the vision splendid."

"Madame Piranello standing for Eve?" I guessed.

"No, no," he replied, with a little temper, "women seek admiration and not artistic effects. It's a great pity. . . . You see, Claire's older than she was, and now she wants to show her tiny waist and round figure, and she's too short for the style, too short-legged. It's a great pity. . . . Still, perhaps it's for the best: another ideal has shaped itself in me. She must be tall, and very slight. There must be about her the adorable awkwardness of childhood: the indecision of form of the young girl," and he drew the outline of the figure with his thumb in the air. "Just a hint, perhaps, of curve in the hips, but not the vase-like roundness of womanhood—I love the subtle hesitation of line, every indication of youth, youth with curiosity in the eyes and eagerness—the possibility but not the suggestion of passion."

"Your new ideal will be difficult to find," I remarked.

"No, no!" he exclaimed, "one of these days I am sure to come across it. Life's a treasure-house, a miraculous treasure-house which holds everything, a thousand, thousand ideals. Its richness is inconceivable: while the idea is yet vague in the mind, nature presents you with its realization. I'll meet my ideal one of these days."

"And how about your old men?" I asked.

"That was all rather crude, don't you think?" he replied carelessly. "A mere contrast with my girl figures: a sort of rebound of passion. I no longer feel that impulse. I don't want worn, tired heads of old men, but the perfect figure of the mature man, force in the yoke-like shoulders, energy in the long, flat steel bands of the thigh-muscles, and the face of conquering achievement. I have a perfect model for my Adam," he added, "Adam who finds a larger freedom in disobedience and a wider kingdom in revolt: he must be as strong as Michel

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Angelo's ideal, but not so tortured: more easeful, graceful, I think, more like a figure of Donatello. . . ."

Next spring the Adam and Eve of Piranello made a week's sensation in Paris, and shortly afterward the gossips were all agog: he had left his wife without rhyme or reason, they said, and was going about with a foreigner, a Danish girl of extraordinary appearance.

I was eager to see her and to know what would be the result of the separation. Madame Piranello, I was informed, was living very quietly in a little house on the borders of the forest of Fontainebleau. She seemed perfectly happy, Dartier told me.

"There's a great deal of worldly wisdom in that little thing," he remarked; "she will fall on her feet. The son of R—, the Minister of Justice, is mad about her. But she will not marry him. My wife says she really cares for Piranello in spite of his bad treatment of her, or perhaps because of it," the genial cynic added with a smile. "But Piranello's in a bad way," he went on, "his latest ideal is a caution: you must see her. . . ."

Sure enough, I did see her a week afterward at a reception in the Latin Quarter, where artists and editors came together and a few society people, just to reconcile smartness with talent.

She came into the room a little before Piranello: she was as tall as he was—with a crown of ashen-fair hair, parted at the side and brought into a big sweep across the forehead like a boy's, and knotted tightly at the nape: long, green eyes, with triangular face and pointed chin. Her figure seemed to be all angles: even Piranello could scarcely complain of her roundness. She talked French with a harsh, northern accent. She was not sympathetic to me: there was something catlike cruel in the hard, naked eyes, something of the snake in that flat, pointed face.

Piranello was as hieratic as ever: but not so self-poised as he had been. He watched his Dane, too, as he had never watched his wife. I wondered vaguely what the upshot would be. He asked me to come to a private view of some of his pictures in the Rue de Seze. I went. The man's art was disquieting. Here and there a new symbolism showed itself and certain ghostly effects of peculiar intensity and significance had come into his work: but the color scheme was gloomy and brutal. The joy of living had disappeared from his work—passion it seemed had its Nemesis shadow.

Still his art was interesting. There was a head of Jupiter thrown out over clouds as fine as anything, and modern—for this God had sightless, blind eyes. Near by was a girl-child's figure, very slight and tall and thin—too thin, and yet with beauty in its awkwardness: the face



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

in some strange way suggested a skull: it was entitled *Une file d'Eve* and had an immense success in Paris. There was something *macabre* about it, something preternaturally sinister.

Piranello was no longer as frank as he used to be: he would not talk about himself and his aims as of old, perhaps he was not so sure of himself. I felt the solution of the problem would be with Madame Piranello.

Madame Dartier took me one day to see her at Fontainebleau. There were a couple of men in the room—one a lame man with a powerful head, and a look on his face of suffering. He had had a bad fall, I learned, from horseback—and had injured his spine: his life was measured to him in months by the doctors. He had been an admirer of Madame Piranello for years and was comparatively content now, because he could see her without constraint and had induced her to use his motor car. The other visitor was a young man of a very different type. He was the R— of whom Dartier had spoken: with his brown hair, gray eyes and short, sturdy figure he looked like a Norman. His family was very rich, Madame Dartier told me. He had studied law in Paris, and had published a volume of poems. He was a good deal younger than Madame Piranello, and evidently very much in love with her. Madame Dartier was certain that Claire would end by marrying him.

"It would be the best thing in the world for her," she said; "she really deserves some happiness after that wild life with Piranello."

"Does she care for him?" I asked.

"Of course," replied Madame Dartier, "she is five or six years older than he is, and his devotion would win any woman in time—especially one who knows life as well as Claire knows it. Piranello made her see all the colors of it, I can tell you."

"Why don't they marry?" I asked. "Surely Piranello will give her a divorce."

"Oh, that's all arranged," said Madame Dartier. "One good thing about you men is that you seldom play dog-in-the-manger as women love to do. Claire will be free in a month or two. But I'm afraid she's hesitating: you see she had a real passion for Piranello, and after the fire's burnt out, we women cover up the ashes and keep them warm for a long time. . . ."

As the afternoon wore away we all went for a walk in the great forest, the finest in the world, I sometimes think, and I had an opportunity to talk quietly to Madame Piranello.

I told her quite frankly that I had seen Piranello lately, and was interested in his work.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"You were a real friend of his, I know," she remarked; warmly, I thought.

"I was, indeed," I said, "and am still, and therefore very sorry that there is this cloud between you: in you he has lost his best friend."

She looked at me frankly and her eyes were pathetic:

"He does not think so," she began: "but perhaps you are right. At any rate, I'm frightened when I think of him, frightened and anxious. . . .

"He has a lot of good in him"—like all women, she would try to justify her feelings by reason—"a lot of good, and he will come to grief, I'm afraid. Artists all strain after peculiarities and the quest is dangerous: the preterhuman is not always the superhuman, oftener indeed it is the inhuman," she added. . . . "That woman he has got now is a maniac, a *detraquée*: one has only got to look at her to see it, a morphino-maniac or worse."

"His pictures are wonderful," I said.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "yes, but not healthy any more."

Her insight astounded me.

"You see, he no longer has you for his model," I said; "you were his ideal."

I had touched the right note at last.

"Do you know," she said gravely, "I think women know more about life than men. He and I were made for each other really, only he does not see it. It is a pity—you complicated ones always miss the obvious. He wanted a change, at least his body did, and *mon Dieu* he's got it. She has a temper like a fiend, you know, and she'll wear him to a rag, because he's a real artist, is Nello: his art is his life, and as soon as his art deteriorates he'll go to the bad."

"Why don't you see him, and tell him all that?" I asked. "You have clearer eyes than he has, and who knows, you might save him still." I was drawing the bow at a venture.

She looked at me questioningly: a half smile stole across her face: yet her eyes were kind: I thought I understood. . . .

Three months later Madame Dartier said to me:

"Do you know that Monsieur and Madame Piranello are together again? He nearly killed his Dane one night: he found her morphia drunk with the coachman: and he turned them out into the night: she has disappeared, and a good thing, too. . . . Claire went back to him at once. She's good, if you like, but foolish—blind, I mean, to her own interest as all good women are. R— would have married her at any moment, and given her everything. . . ."

"Everything, except the one thing she wanted," I added. Madame Dartier smiled and nodded with perfect comprehension.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

When I spoke to Dartier, I found him less hopeful:

"I believe Piranello still sees his Dane: she's like a taste for absinthe, that woman: if you once get it you'll die with it or of it," and he laughed. "If Claire ever finds him out there will be a final rupture. She's very proud and won't stand it. What he can see in that bag of bones I can't imagine, yet she holds him like a glue-pot."

The following summer Dartier's prediction came true.

Madame Piranello, he told me, had left her husband finally: she had caught him with the Dane, whom he would not promise to give up.

"A miserable business altogether," said Dartier. "Piranello is going to the devil, though I hear he is working on a big picture—the Faust story. He has altered terribly. He takes morphia, too, now; like grows to like."

"And Madame Piranello?" I questioned.

"Oh, she's all right," he replied. "A charming little woman. My wife had her here for two or three weeks: she is now living again at the little house near Fontainebleau: my wife says she will not be unmarried long. There are half a dozen men after her. She is charming, you know, and decorative and wise to boot."

I acquiesced, but I was a little hurt by his careless talk. I determined to call on Madame Piranello and see for myself how the wind was blowing.

I found just a touch of bitterness in her which I regretted: it came out when we talked of Piranello.

"So you tried the great experiment," I began. "It was very brave of you—very brave and kind."

"A poor farce," she said. "We women cannot give sight to the blind: God alone can do that."

"It was a mistake, then?" I asked.

Her eyebrows went up.

"That Danish fiend has got him," she said; "now we shall see what she makes of him. If she helps him to great things, she's justified: but she won't. I know him so well. He's a big child, and needs to be taken care of. Really I always took great care of him, though he did not know it, and now . . . she only wants a companion on the road to hell."

She broke off.

"She informed me one day that he had made me, that I owed whatever talent I had to him—*la bonne blague*—it's very little one can owe anybody. . . ."

I was struck by her wisdom.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"I wish you would tell me," I said, "about your early life!"

"Oh," she said, "there's nothing to tell. I was brought up in the usual way. Perhaps a little more strictly than usual—a Convent school and a bourgeois home—all stupid and proper, you know. Of course we girls talked, and what one did not know, the other did, and if we were kept on the chain, so to speak, our thoughts and imaginations were free and they roamed about in vagabond fancies. What a gorgeous life that is of a girl's day-dreams, and nightly imaginings. The day dreams—all poems of fairy princes and leaders of men and heroes. And the night fancies when one can pull the clothes over one's head and imagine what one likes, trying to relieve our desires in dreams—the fear of the pursuer, and the hope that we shall be overtaken and feel the strong arms about us, and the man's lips on ours. . .

"Then one afternoon Piranello came and took away my breath. Oh, I admit it—he's so handsome and dark and strong, so different from anything I had imagined—so priestlike, interesting. I was all in a flutter. He took me to his studio with my mother, and I saw his paintings—and that astonishing Madonna he did with the curious half-smile of content more enigmatical than Leonardo's. Of course, I loved him. Love taught me both what he wanted and what I wanted. . . .

"Curious, isn't it? One does not see one's own type at first. As a girl one's a fool. I would have given anything for a little Grecian nose—one seeks to hide one's peculiarities, instead of accentuating them. How blind one is, and then suddenly one learns from a man or a painting, or gradually by experience, that it is better to be oneself, and by being oneself one suddenly becomes a personage—originality is individuality, personality—anything you like—even genius. . . ."

"You are very wise," I said. "It is quite true: all you say is quite true; but how did the difficulty arise?"

She sighed a little.

"I hardly know. Piranello wanted to keep me as I was. But I learned the lesson: I was changing—love had taught me many things, passion, too, had taught me. He wished me to be stationary, innocent and angular of body, with unseeing eyes. But I could not remain a girl, and he would not realize that it is the hint of understanding which makes innocence mysterious and the suggestion of curve which makes the line seductive. My development was normal: it followed the ordinary course, while he is a sort of morbid development."

"Will you never go back to him again?" I asked.

"Oh, never," she replied. "It's final. I did all I could, more than I ought to have done. It was all useless, and worse than useless. He has gone under and wants to go lower. . . . A woman must not let pity

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

master her: it is as dangerous for her as it is for the man to let passion master him—passion and compassion are our mortal enemies.”

\* \* \*

It was two or three years before I saw or heard of them again, and then I got a message through Dartier from Piranello, asking me to come and see his pictures. I went and was shocked by his appearance. He had shrunk to one half his former size and aged beyond recognition. The face that had been rather plump was all seamed and lined and wrinkled. The skin had fallen into pouches, the large eyes had grown small: the black hair all gray, scant on the temples, wispy, thin:

“Ah, I have changed,” he said: the very voice had dwined away.

After talking of this and that he soon got on his art.

“I want to show you my pictures,” he cried, “my great picture. It is symbolic. You know I used to talk of life as a treasure-house in which you found everything. It’s not a treasure-house,” he said, coming close to me and speaking in a whisper. “It’s hell,” and his yellow, tired eyes bored into mine. . . .

“You know the old legend of Faust?” he went on. “He asks the devil for this and for that and the devil gives him all he asks, and as he gives, the devil takes pieces of his soul in exchange, till he has got it all. . . . Life gives us this and that of our heart’s desire, and takes our soul in exchange piecemeal, and our friends come to us and beg us not to give the last bit when we have already given it,” and he grinned savagely, “and then we die because without a soul the body rots, doesn’t it? the soul’s the salt. . . . I’ve imagined the world-devil like a king. He gives Faust riches and honor and beauty—girl after girl, fashioned to his desire, and when Faust asked for more he said, ‘You have nothing more to give me in exchange. You are all mine. You have been mine for a long time: don’t bother me—you silly fool!’”

His voice had grown shrill. I stared at him: there was insanity in his working face and in the wild sadness of his bloodshot eyes..

“And your Dane?” I asked, to shake off the effect of his bitterness.

“She’s dead,” he threw out indifferently, “she took an overdose one night. . . .”

\* \* \*

I never saw him again, but I heard of him only last year. It came about in this way: I was invited to M. Souchart’s, you know the man who made a great fortune in Paris by the lines of steamers. There I

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

met Claire. She had married R— shortly after our last talk, and had now two children. It was at her home that I heard of Piranello again from Dartier.

“A funny history,” he said. “I always knew that she would succeed and that Piranello would come to grief. We are all wise after the event: the unexpected soon becomes the inevitable.”

“What happened?” I asked.

“She must not guess we are talking about it,” he said, drawing me aside. “I can tell you all there is to be told in five minutes. Piranello had a little Italian model, with whom he was in love, and she had a friend as usual, her *amant de coeur*. One night Piranello found them in the studio together: he had a mania for discoveries, you may remember. I suppose he thought himself as strong as ever, for he attacked the young Italian, who threw him, and he struck against the great crucifix, you remember his enameled crucifix. The cross, it appears, tipped over and crushed him—the cross of his own making. . . .”

*NICE, May, 1910.*

## THE UGLY DUCKLING

AFTER HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

*Published in the collection The Veils of Isis (1915)*

MY earliest memories are neither very dear nor very interesting; but when still very young I became conscious that I was unlike my brothers and sisters: I grew faster than they did and as soon as I out-topped them the tolerance they had hitherto shown me ceased; instead of kindness I got nothing but blame: whatever I did they found fault with: I was always getting in their way it seemed and always being snapped at by a brother or sister with reason and without. At first I didn't mind this much: with the unconsciousness of youth I took it all as part of the unexpectedness of life and paid no particular attention to it, giving as good as I got. But day by day the differences between my brothers and sisters and myself grew more marked, and I soon began to notice that they were getting our mother on their side and putting her against me, which made me miserable.

In my wretchedness I would wander away from the others, for I hated to show how they had hurt me, and took to swimming about in the lake. I was attracted by the smell of a plant which only grew in rather deep water, and when I tasted it as young things do, I found it

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

scented and sweet and infinitely more to my liking than the scraps of meat which the others were always hunting for along the shore of the lake or at the back-doors of the apefolk. And this taste of mine seemed to annoy my mother almost as much as it did my brothers and sisters, who all declared that the plant I liked was bitter and bad and made them as sick as I am sure the scraps of meat did me. At first, I couldn't for the life of me see why I shouldn't eat what I liked so long as I accorded the others the same freedom; but my mother told me it was wrong to be peculiar; it was good to be like the others and bad to be different from them, which seemed to me, I don't know why, senseless and unreasonable. But one day I was shown the matter from her point of view.

My lonely wanderings had made me fond of going into deep water, and I was soon a far stronger swimmer than any of my brethren: one day I ventured to swim out to the reed-fringed island in the center of the lake, and coast about it. There I found food of all sorts in profusion and of the very best, and nothing would content me but I must return at once and tell the others of my discovery. As luck would have it our mother had gone up the yard with the big drake, and I soon persuaded the ducklings to follow me to the island. It was a good way out and when we left the shelter of the shore, the waves ran higher, and soon one of the little ducklings was in trouble: seeing that, I helped her and in a little while the whole brood came safely to shore. But perhaps because they were tired and a little afraid they didn't like the food I showed them, and soon all wanted to get home again. I was disgusted with them but too proud to beg them to stay and give the new place a fair trial, so I stepped at once into the water and began to swim back.

On the way home one duckling after another was buffeted by the waves and got giddy, and in spite of all my efforts, if our mother had not espied us and come to my assistance, one or more of the brood must have been drowned. As soon as we all reached the shore our mother turned on me and upbraided me bitterly; I was not only ugly and overgrown, but wicked as well: she didn't know how I could be a child of hers: I was all neck and legs, not like a nice round duckling at all; dirty green, too, in color and not fluffy and soft like my pretty brothers and sisters. They were right to call me "The Ugly Duckling"; my conceit was intolerable, and if she ever again caught me breaking bounds and leading her little dears into danger, she'd teach me it was dangerous to break her commands.

All this time she went on smoothing and petting the little ones who seemed most knocked about; but I could see that the little beasts

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

pretended to be more exhausted than they really were, just to get her sympathy, and perhaps be favored later with a dainty tid-bit or two which she might discover. And this set me against them almost as much as the delight they plainly showed on hearing me scolded.

After that adventure they always called me names, “Long-Neck” or “Black Shanks” or “Ugly Duckling” or something, and I took to living more and more by myself.

It became my chief pleasure to swim right out in the pond amid the high waves, and soon I got to know every nook and corner of the pond as well as the oldest drake.

When I came back after any of these expeditions I was always blamed by my mother who held me up now as an example of all that was wild and wicked to my brothers and sisters.

“You think you’re very clever,” she used to say, “but one of these days you’ll be properly punished for your impudence. I’m sure I don’t know how you came to be a child of mine. I’m ashamed of you. You’re not like a nice obedient little duck at all.”

This made me very wretched, and I told her I thought she was unkind, but she insisted that what my brothers and sisters did was right, and it was naughty of me not to be like them.

One day, however, they were all glad I was not like them. We were out at the edge of the pond, and I was sunning myself on the sand when a rough red terrier came rushing down at us. All my brothers and sisters ran together quacking and crying in huge dismay. And though our mother went in front of them, it was perfectly plain that she, too, was frightened; in fact, she quacked them all into the water as soon as she could. But I didn’t see why we should all run from one little animal with four legs, and so I puffed out my wings to get them ready to strike and to shield my neck and went toward the dog. As soon as he saw that there was someone not afraid of him, he stopped in astonishment and began to bark. I could not help hissing myself a little in defiance and to keep up my courage.

“Come on,” I said.

But he jumped round me barking, and it was quite easy for me to turn and face him all the time. In a minute or two he got tired, and then became a little ashamed of himself, so he pretended to see something interesting in the distance and scampered off. When I turned to the rest they were all in the water, and I thought they would at least thank me, for by facing the dog I had given them the time to get into safety. They all knew that if it hadn’t been for me some of them might have been killed. I was a little proud of myself, and so was the less prepared for the return they made me. As I came toward them after



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

a last look at the terrier, my brother Bill called out:

“Look at ‘Long Neck’ strutting about and showing off.”

And sister Jane cried: “No wonder the dog ran away, he’s so ugly,” and they all laughed at the insult.

“Cowards needn’t talk about being ugly,” I replied.

But my mother snapped me up:

“You shouldn’t speak so,” she said, “and you shouldn’t be so proud; it is nothing to be proud of, a long neck.”

The contempt hurt me so much that tears came into my eyes, so I just walked into the water and swam away out by myself. The moment I passed the usual limit of the shallow water, my brethren all quacked loudly and made mother watch me, and she called me to come back, but my heart was too full; I cruised about by myself.

A little while later she called us all to dinner, but I didn’t come: I knew they were going to hunt about for worms and pieces of meat and refuse in the farmyard, and all that stuff used to make me sick, so I said I wasn’t hungry. But my mother cried back that I was to come in any case, that I soon would be hungry. I replied that then I would eat some the reeds or the plants that grew around the island in the middle of the pond, and this was a signal for a new outburst.

“He thinks he’s very fine,” quacked Bill. “He is a vegetarian and won’t eat a nice tasty bit of meat: he wants to be different from everybody.”

For answer I began swimming out to the island and let them jeer. From that day on I took to going about entirely by myself, and when I was lonely I just swallowed the tears and lived with my dreams.

One day I watched a hawk flying over the wood. I thought it must be fine to fly so high, and I began to exercise my wings and soon took delight in flying all round the island and circling higher and higher above the tops of the trees of the great wood.

One day my brothers saw me coming down and of course told my mother, and she took me seriously to task:

“You’ll fall and kill yourself one day,” she said. “It is no proper ambition for a duck; you don’t want to make yourself hard and leathery; you ought to be plump and soft and juicy.”

I said I hated to fill myself like the rest till I couldn’t waddle, but at this they all set upon me and began to peck at me. Involuntarily I lifted my wings, and struck, not hard, but just to keep them off. As luck would have it I hit Bill, and he gave one loud squawk and turned over on his back as if he were dead. My mother went and fondled him and called him every endearing name she could lay her tongue to, and said I was a great brute to use my strength like that, and she

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

would have nothing more to do with me; I was a beast for injuring my brother, for only a beast would do such a thing; and she hoped she would never see me again.

I had gone into the water after the quarrel, but this hurt me so much that I simply sprang from the water and in half a dozen strokes of my wings, was out of hearing.

From that day on, I only saw them in the distance. My life was very lonely: I had no one to play with, no one to talk to, no one to tell what I thought or felt. Indeed, almost the only amusement left me was the pleasure of long flights. In a short time I found I could fly for hours, and the fields of air became my playground, but I never ventured very high, for I remembered what my mother had said about falling and killing myself.

How long this life went on, I don't know, but I grew and grew and grew so that I was ashamed of myself. I was bigger than all my brothers and sisters put together, and was not frightened of anything: for one day a dog ran at me and I struck him with my right wing and he went away limping and yelling worse even than my brother Bill. This filled me with pride, but I should have liked to have had some one to tell it to.

Indeed, it was the loneliness of my life which made me take the next step. On the other side of the pond there was a farmhouse and yard and many broods of hens, who were very proud indeed of their breed; the Anglo-Dorkings. Unable at times to stand the misery of my lonely state, I crossed the pond and took to moping with these creatures and listening to their talk.

An old hen, with some half-grown chickens was the first to speak to me, and I paid her many compliments by way of thanks. I couldn't help smiling, however, when she took all my courtesy praise as merited, and confided to me that when young the biggest rooster in the yard, an old Cochin with hairy legs, had called her "The Angel of the World." This surprised me, for she was both old and ugly and could never, I thought, have been pretty. Two of her chickens were friendly to me, but their brethren eyed me askance and at once began to rag me for my thick legs and the size and shape of my feet.

The better I knew the hens, the less I liked them. They were just as base and even dirtier than the ducks: they all ate greedily and were cruelly selfish and indifferent to others' pain.

One day, I saw the two pullets I liked flirting with some young roosters; when entreated too nearly they ran away, it is true, but I saw that their flight was only pretended coldness put on to increase the ardor of the suitors; in reality they were both delighted.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

The Anglo-Dorking view of life was just as timid as that of the ducks. When the chickens wanted to stretch their wings and fly, the mother hen told them it was very wrong, and when I argued with her, I soon saw that she only said this in order to have all her chickens about her, and so gratify at once her vanity and her mother love. If I ventured to suggest that all one's powers should be used, she flew out at what she called my vile immorality, and assured me that no child of hers would ever listen to such mad unreason.

One day when the mother hen was talking to the old Cochin, I wandered with the rest down to the shore of the lake. There the dancing, cool water tempted me, and I waded in and swam about rejoicing in my skill and strength. One or two of the chickens ventured into the water in emulation; but they nearly got drowned, and I had to spoon them out with my bill. They were wretched little creatures who couldn't even swim, and the cold water made them very uncomfortable, and gave them colds. When the mother hen came down and found them, she was very angry with me, and told me she would have me punished if I didn't behave myself better. I found that the great law among the Anglo-Dorkings was to do as others did, for if you didn't, they all condemned you as vile and bad.

I couldn't help asking myself whether there was any reason in all their condemnations, and I soon discovered that the foundation of their morality was self-pride. They all really believed that whatever the Anglo-Dorkings did was right, and the law of the Universe. They even fashioned God in their own likeness, a superior sort of fowl, and most of them were sure that he was a true Anglo-Dorking.

They were not only conceited; but curiously self-willed and quarrelsome. They believed in fighting about everything; they decided questions of government by a dispute between the two parties and in their courts matters of right and wrong, of truth and justice even, were settled by hiring paid liars on either side to falsify facts and give a plausible coloring to patent absurdities. They went so far as to explain what they considered defects in the constitution of the Universe by inventing an evil deity which they called a devil, and by pretending that the god and the devil were always at war. Whenever any of them got ill through over-eating or drinking they ascribed the sickness to the malefic power of the devil, and so got rid of the necessity of blaming themselves and reforming their conduct.

Their chief amusement was a pitched battle between two cocks; and their power of eating, which they carried to gluttony, was as highly esteemed among them as courage.

One day they got up a fight, and the two cocks chosen for the

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

combat fought for nearly an hour. Very soon one cock was over-matched, but all his fellows encouraged him to go on, till he staggered about the ring half blind, with strips of skin hanging down his neck, and bleeding from a hundred wounds. It was a dreadful and degrading spectacle, and the faces of the bystanders showed such eagerness and ghoulish satisfaction that I could stand it no longer.

“Stop, stop,” I cried, “you brutes. Don’t you see that the poor thing has no chance, and can only suffer?”

At once all the Anglo-Dorkings fell upon me in fury, and drove me out of the yard.

The Anglo-Dorkings didn’t talk so much or so loudly as the ducks: indeed, they were rather silent except after a fight or birth or some unusual occurrence; then they crowed and bragged and flapped their wings as loudly as ever they could.

The habit these animals had of bragging and crowing was absolutely ridiculous. When I first heard one of their chiefs crow for a full quarter of an hour about the virtues of the Anglo-Dorkings I burst out laughing, which was taken in very bad part: I was told that self-respect was natural in an Anglo-Dorking; but it was not their self-respect which struck one, but their extravagant vainglory.

Gradually I came to understand that their inordinate conceit and belief in their own virtues was the secret of their strength. It gave them the power of banding together when threatened by any enemy. When a rat once appeared in the farmyard and wanted to make a meal off one of the little fluffy chicks the hens stood together as a rampart in defense, and the cocks went forward to attack the intruder, who thought it best to get away while he could; and even when a hawk hovered above the yard, the hens, though they retreated, covered the little ones with their wings, protecting them at the risk of their own lives.

This conduct seemed to me admirable. The Anglo-Dorkings were strong from this virtue of union, and from a power of breeding which was quite extraordinary. They were always bringing forth fresh broods, which, as soon as they grew up, used to fend for themselves.

The worst of it was that any virtue they possessed was always obscured by some counterbalancing vice, or by some brainless hypocrisy or make-believe which robbed it of all savor. For example, it seemed to me as to all animals that our bodily desires should be satisfied, of course in moderation. But the Anglo-Dorkings indulged in over-eating, and especially in over-drinking, to such an extent that in middle age seven out of ten of them were unwieldy fat and suffering from the diseases incident to shameful excess and grossness. I felt no shame in

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

any natural desire so long as it was under due restraint and subordinated to reason of some higher purpose; but they pretended that hens had no natural sex-feeling, and insisted on bringing them up in unreasoning ignorance of their chief function.

For a long time I couldn't find any explanation of this preposterous and stupid convention. They all talked of it as the heart of their morality, declaring that chastity was the chiefest virtue in a pullet, and innocence a sort of added glory, and when I protested that innocence was only another name for ignorance, and that self-control of sexual desire and not chastity was the way of virtue, they showed me measureless contempt and dislike. At the same time they were not nearly so particular in regard to the young roosters, but treated their love-making with an amused tolerance: "Young roosters will be young roosters," was one of their proverbs. This and the fact that the hens had no share whatever in making the laws, of course showed that they looked upon the hens as their inferiors, and wished to keep them in a servile condition for some reason or other. It was impossible to persuade the foolish creatures that if they lifted the hens to an equality with themselves, and taught them instead of keeping them in disgraceful ignorance, they would intensify affection, and ennoble the whole commerce of love. For some vague reason the Anglo-Dorking roosters feared that if the hens were instructed they would get out of hand and cease to be subservient instruments of their pleasure, and they exalted hen-purity and innocence and constancy into the chiefest of virtues, and hedged them about with all the sanctions of religion, whereas in reality their pretended virtue was nothing better than a convention and excuse for short-sighted selfishness. For the ignorance of the pullets could in the nature of things only last for a short period in youth, and the chastity was sure to be forfeited before maturity.

All this hen-morality seemed to me inept and hypocritical, and in essence base; but the Anglo-Dorkings resented any discussion of the matter as proof of viciousness. Often and often I remonstrated with them, and pointed out that it was necessary to know all about the sex-function, and that it should be studied most carefully in both sexes as the central secret of life; but even the hens hid their heads under their wings while I spoke, pretending to be ashamed, while the roosters attacked me with violence. I found that I should have to keep my mouth shut and my reason in abeyance if I wanted to live among them in peace.

But, after all, it was their conceit and clannish spirit which rendered it impossible for me to live with them. True, they didn't

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

interfere with me much, being too intent on their own affairs; but as soon as I made them aware of my existence by laughing at them, or by begging them not to fight by reasoning with them, they all fell upon me with one accord, their unanimity being really wonderful.

The more I knew of them the clearer I saw that the soul of them was self-pride. Surely there never were bipeds so pleased with themselves. One custom they had which was exquisitely absurd, and yet was plainly the outgrowth of their extravagant self-esteem. There was a poor skinny rooster, who was so old that he could scarcely move; his comb hung down about his neck, and his tail feathers had all fallen out, and yet even the youngest and handsomest hens fluttered about him in a swarm and made up to him, flattering him in a silly and disgraceful way. I couldn't understand the reason of this, for the old rooster could never have been even a moderately good specimen, and was now weak-kneed, decrepit and querulously vain. When the young hens flattered him, and he tried to strut and crow, he looked so funny that I did not know whether to laugh or cry. But the Anglo-Dorking hens all frowned on me, and one of them told me I ought to be ashamed of myself laughing at one of their lords.

"What does that mean, a lord?" I asked.

"One of our rulers," she said.

"But why does he rule?" I asked. "Is he wiser or better than the rest of you?"

"Oh, dear, no," she replied, "but we honor him more."

"But why?" I asked, "what has he done?"

"Nothing," she replied; "he's the son of his father."

"I suppose he is," I answered, "but what did his father do?"

"Nothing," she replied, "that's his nobility."

I could not understand their reverence for useless, worthless creatures, but merely to question its validity got one into disgrace with the Anglo-Dorkings. They resented any criticism of their beliefs or customs, and were amusingly certain that all such criticism springs from ignorance or inferiority. My questions about their lords, and the reverence they paid them, caused them to look on me with suspicion and dislike: they began to call me a foreigner, and spoke of ducks as an inferior species of creatures. I didn't mind this much, for I felt no desire to stand up for the ducks who had cast me off; but when the Anglo-Dorkings began to insist that my admiration for what was right and reasonable was a sign of shallowness, I began to answer back, and the situation grew strained. They threatened and I scoffed, for I was young, and it soon became apparent that there would be an outbreak of violence. Curiously enough, a very small cause determined the

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

catastrophe.

I have already told how the ducks used to eat scraps of offal. The custom seemed to me filthy and unhealthy; but they excused it by pleading hunger. The Anglo-Dorkings, however, went much further; they hung dead meat up till it became putrid, and then gobbled it down at feasts and ceremonial dinners. And when one turned from the loathsome mess they used to remark complacently that "only the well-born could really enjoy the aristocratic flavor of high game."

I made fun of this argument, and thereby fell into utter disgrace. In their anger they invented all sorts of slanders about me: "I had been expelled from among the ducks," they said, "for nearly killing one of my smaller brethren." "I lived," another story ran, "by stealing from the game larders." No invention was too improbable, no lie too absurd for the Anglo-Dorkings to believe about any creature who ventured to criticize them.

I discovered incidentally that they had outlawed and expelled some of their noblest and best for no other reason than that those wise ones had dared to find fault with some of their customs. Even a certain lord, who, in spite of his opportunities as a parasite and hanger-on, had developed some individuality and courage, was disgraced for making fun of them, and hounded out of the country as immoral because he couldn't be sufficiently hypocritical or servile to win their favor by flattery.

At length their animosity to me became active. I was challenged to fight by this cock and by that, and as soon as I flew up high to evade attack they called me a coward, and when I struck with the elbows of my wings, with which I was able to hit hard, I was set upon by the whole crowd for striking unfairly, and was so bepicked and bespurred that I was glad to get away with whole bones. I fled for my life and they stood together in a crowd and flapped their wings in triumph, and crowed in unison for some time after I had passed out of their sight.

Life soon became tragic to me in its loneliness. The ducks feared me; the Anglo-Dorkings hated me; and when I passed to the other end of the pond and met the geese I fared but little better. True, they were not nearly so clannish as the Anglo-Dorkings; they had more respect, too, for originality and individuality. I could never make out why they were called "geese," or rather why the word "goose" among the hens had come to mean something foolish. For really these geese were more intelligent and better educated than the Anglo-Dorkings, or even the Cochins, and had a far keener sense of what was reasonable as opposed to custom and convention. Taking them all in all, I

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

thought the geese superior to the Anglo-Dorkings in many respects: they were more civilized, more courteous, with a higher intellectual life.

In particular they found the hen-morality as absurd as I did; and the hypocrisy and self-applause of the Anglo-Dorkings were as distasteful to them as to me. I might have lived among the geese in comparative happiness had I happened to be born a goose, but their language was very difficult to me, and in spite of all my efforts I never entirely mastered it or made it my own.

I took to living more and more by myself, and resolved not to depend in any degree upon others. After all, I used to say, consoling myself, the sky does not belong to the Anglo-Dorkings, and the fields of air and the sunshine by day, and the winds and stars by night were as much mine as theirs. If they had made me an outcast and pariah, what, after all, did it matter? My life was mine to live as I chose, and the days were mine to spend nobly if I pleased. And so I took to the life of a solitary, and grew strong in loneliness, though always a little sad.

One day I was out in the pond when something made me look up, and I saw a skein of great birds coming down the sky; the sun turned their wings to silver. When they neared the wood I thought they would alight, but at the last moment they rose again to clear it, and soon went high up in the blue, and dwindled away, but one that seemed weary lagged behind and came beating down nearer and nearer, and at last splashed in the water close to the island. To my astonishment it was just like me, but evidently very tired, so I went over to it, and when I came near I saw that it was more graceful than I was, with slighter neck and more rounded breast, so I said:

“Good day, miss, you are an Ugly Duckling, too.”

She turned on me at once. “Duckling, indeed, you don’t know what you are talking about; I am a swan, as you are.”

“Am I, indeed?” I asked, in amazement, and then in a breath, “what is a swan?”

“The finest bird in the world.”

“Really?” I cried, “I thought ducks and hens were the finest birds.”

“Little tame beasts,” she said, “fit for nothing but to quack and crow and breed. I suppose this little pond is theirs: I would never have come into it if I hadn’t been very tired from the long flight.”

“Why do you call the swans the finest birds in the world?” I ventured to ask.

“Because we are the Children of Light,” she replied proudly, “and



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

follow the Sun round the world.”

“Are you going there now?” I asked.

“Yes, to the other side of the world,” she replied proudly, “to the land of sunshine; but now I am tired and hungry,” she added, with a little smile.

“Oh, come with me,” I said, “and I’ll show you where you can get such nice things to eat,” and I guided her round the island to my quiet eating place under the trees, and there she ate and drank so daintily I could have kissed her: and afterwards she preened herself and made her toilet, and I watched her with eyes rounded with admiration. I saw she was very tired, so I asked her wouldn’t she like to sleep, and led her again to the quietest place in the whole pond, and she said I must wake her before the sun got low, for she must join the rest that night at a lake far away. I kept watch while she slept, but all the time my heart was burning within me, for I knew if she went away and left me I should die of grief. Life by myself seemed ten times as lonely and miserable since I had seen her and admired her delicious beauty, and I simply couldn’t bear her to go away and forget me. Tears came burning into my eyes at the thought. Besides, I, too, had always hated the darkness and gloom of the sad Northern winter; though I had been taught it was wrong to love the light as I did. Now, however, that I knew it was right, I was filled with the desire to fly far away and see the world and have great Adventures; for I, too, was a Child of the Light.

Suddenly the resolve came; I would fly away with her. My heart beat in my throat with the hope. I could remain on the wing for hours and hours, all day long if I chose, for I was very hard and strong, thanks to my lonely life. The thought of her companionship thrilled me and encouraged me, and caressing her in my heart as she slept I resolved to go with her if she would let me to the end of the world. I felt a little sorry about leaving the ducks, but, after all, they didn’t care for me, and I loved the newcomer in quite a different way. She seemed to me grace itself and beautiful exceedingly, and proud as a queen, and I wondered if she would ever let me touch her even with the tips of my wings.

While I was cruising about her quite silently and watching her, the swan awoke and at once, to my astonishment, began another toilet. She flittered the water over her shoulders and laughed as the drops ran over her breast and sparkled on her pearly throat.

I asked her was she quite rested, and she said gaily:

“Oh, yes”; and I wanted to know why she hadn’t slept till I woke her, and she said she supposed it was the anxiety, because now she

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

had rested, she would have to go. She thanked me prettily for the food I had given her and said that really my resting place near the island was very sweet.

Emboldened by her kindness, I asked her could I go with her? She turned to me and said:

“Of course, if you like, there is nothing to prevent you.”

That was not what I wanted, so with a lump in my throat, I asked: “Would you like me to go?”

She looked at me a little while as if considering, which frightened me quite cold, but at length she said bravely:

“I should like you to come because you are a man swan, and the lake on the other side of the world is such a long, long way off and the others are all quite old, and I get a little frightened flying in the dark all by myself. Sometimes I scarcely know what to do when the wind gets high and I am away up out of sight of earth.”

“Oh, that must be fine!” I cried. “I’m very strong and should like it, above everything: it is so good of you to let me go with you: I will do everything for you: I will be your servant and when you sleep I will cruise round you to protect you, you are so lovely,” I added, half afraid.

She shook her head a little at that, and said she didn’t like compliments. But I don’t think she was really displeased, for the next moment she looked at me again with kindness.

“We must go now,” she said; “we are wasting time,” and the next moment she sprang out of the water into the air and I followed. Up and up and up she went in great rings, and I beside her wing-beat for wing-beat, but I had to restrain myself and beat slowly; for I was much the stronger and did not want to hurry her. And after we had gone steadily up and up for some time, she cried to me:

“Look down now and take leave of your duck pond.”

And I looked down and the great height frightened me, for the pond was nothing but a gray speck in the green, miles and miles below, and my heart failed me, for I remembered what my mother had said, that I should fall one day and kill myself, and for a moment I fluttered in the air, but as the swan turned her head to see what was the matter, I struck out again, for I was ashamed of my fear. I went right up to her with strong wing-stroke exulting, for she was beside me, and I felt it was better a thousand times to be killed falling from heaven than to live in a duck pond.

THE HOLY MAN

(After Tolstoi)

*Published in the Collection Unpath'd Waters (1913)*

PAUL, the eldest son of Count Stroganoff, was only thirty-two when he was made a Bishop: he was the youngest dignitary in the Greek Church, yet his diocese was among the largest: it extended for hundreds of miles along the shore of the Caspian. Even as a youth Paul had astonished people by his sincerity and gentleness, and the honours paid to him seemed to increase his lovable qualities.

Shortly after his induction he set out to visit his whole diocese in order to learn the needs of the people. On this pastoral tour he took with him two older priests in the hope that he might profit by their experience. After many disappointments he was forced to admit that they could only be used as aids to memory, or as secretaries; for they could not even understand his passionate enthusiasm. The life of Christ was the model the young Bishop set before himself, and he took joy in whatever pain or fatigue his ideal involved. His two priests thought it unbecoming in a Bishop to work so hard and to be so careless of "dignity and state," by which they meant ease and good living. At first they grumbled a good deal at the work, and with apparent reason, for, indeed, the Bishop forgot himself in his mission, and as the tour went on his body seemed to waste away in the fire of his zeal.

After he had come to the extreme southern point of his diocese he took ship and began to work his way north along the coast, in order to visit all the fishing villages.

One afternoon, after a hard morning's work, he was seated on deck resting. The little ship lay becalmed a long way from the shore, for the water was shallow and the breeze had died down in the heat of the day.

There had been rain-clouds over the land, but suddenly the sun came out hotly and the Bishop caught sight of some roofs glistening rosy-pink in the sunshine a long way off.

"What place is that?" he asked the Captain.

"Krasnovodsk, I think it is called," replied the Captain after some hesitation, "a little nest between the mountains and the sea; a hundred souls perhaps in all."

(Men are commonly called "souls" in Russia as they are called "hands" in England.)

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“One hundred souls,” repeated the Bishop, “shut away from the world; I must visit Krasnavodsk.”

The priests shrugged their shoulders but said nothing; they knew it was no use objecting or complaining. But this time the Captain came to their aid.

“It’s twenty-five versts away,” he said, “and the sailors are done up. You’ll be able to get in easily enough but coming out again against the sea-breeze will take hard rowing.”

“To-morrow is Sunday,” rejoined the Bishop, “and the sailors will be able to rest all day. Please, Captain, tell them to get out the boat. I wouldn’t ask for myself,” he added in a low voice.

The Captain understood; the boat was got out, and under her little lug-sail reached the shore in a couple of hours.

Lermontoff, the big helmsman, stepped at once into the shallow water, and carried the Bishop on his back up the beach, so that he shouldn’t get wet. The two priests got to land as best they could.

At the first cottage the Bishop asked an old man, who was cutting sticks, where the church was.

“Church,” repeated the peasant, “there isn’t one.”

“Haven’t you any pope, any priest here?” enquired the Bishop.

“What’s that?”

“Surely,” replied the Bishop, “you have some one here who visits the dying and prays with them, some one who attends to the sick—women and children?”

“Oh, yes,” cried the old man, straightening himself; “we have a holy man.”

“Holy man?” repeated the Bishop, “who is he?”

“Oh, a good man, a saint,” replied the old peasant, “he does everything for anyone in need.”

“Is he a Christian?”

“I don’t think so,” the old man rejoined, shaking his head, “I’ve never heard that name.”

“Do you pay him for his services?” asked the Bishop.

“No, no,” was the reply, “he would not take anything.”

“How does he live?” the Bishop probed further.

“Like the rest of us, he works in his little garden.”

“Show me where he lives: will you?” said the Bishop gently, and at once the old man put down his axe and led the way among the scattered huts.

In a few moments they came to the cottage standing in a square of cabbages. It was just like the other cottages in the village, poverty-stricken and weather-worn, wearing its patches without thought of

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

concealment.

The old man opened the door:

"Some visitors for you, Ivanushka," he said, standing aside to let the Bishop and his priests pass in.

The Bishop saw before him a broad, thin man of about sixty, dressed half like a peasant, half like a fisherman; he wore the usual sheepskin and high fisherman's boots. The only noticeable thing in his appearance was the way his silver hair and beard contrasted with the dark tan of his skin; his eyes were clear, blue and steady.

"Come in. Excellency," he said, "come in," and he hastily dusted a stool with his sleeve for the Bishop and placed it for him with a low bow.

"Thank you," said the Bishop, taking the seat, "I am somewhat tired, and the rest will be grateful. But be seated, too," he added, for the "holy man" was standing before him bowed in an attitude of respectful attention. Without a word Ivan drew up a stool and sat down.

"I was surprised," the Bishop began, "to find you have no church here, and no priest; the peasant who showed us the way did not even know what 'Christian' meant."

The holy man looked at him with his patient eyes, but said nothing, so the Bishop went on:

"You're a Christian: are you not?"

"I have not heard that name before," said the holy man.

The Bishop lifted his eyebrows in surprise.

"Why then do you attend to the poor and ailing in their need?" he argued; "why do you help them?"

The holy man looked at him for a moment, and then replied quietly:

"I was helped when I was young and needed it."

"But what religion have you?" asked the Bishop.

"Religion," the old man repeated, wonderingly, "what is religion?"

"We call ourselves Christians," the Bishop began, "because Jesus, the founder of our faith, was called Christ. Jesus was the Son of God, and came down from heaven with the Gospel of Good Tidings; He taught men that they were the children of God, and that God is love."

The face of the old man lighted up and he leaned forward eagerly:

"Tell me about Him, please."

The Bishop told him the story of Jesus, and when he came to the end the old man cried:

"What a beautiful story! I've never heard or imagined such a story."

"I intend," said the Bishop, "as soon as I get home again, to send

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

you a priest, and he will establish a church here where you can worship God, and he will teach you the whole story of the suffering and death of the divine Master."

"That will be good of you," cried the old man, warmly, "we shall be very glad to welcome him."

The Bishop was touched by the evident sincerity of his listener.

"Before I go," he said, "and I shall have to go soon, because it will take us some hours to get out to the ship again, I should like to tell you the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples."

"I should like very much to hear it," the old man said quietly.

"Let us kneel down then," said the Bishop, "as a sign of reverence, and repeat it after me, for we are all brethren together in the love of the Master"; and saying this he knelt down, and the old man immediately knelt down beside him and clasped his hands as the Bishop clasped his and repeated the sentences as they dropped from the Bishop's lips.

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

When the old man had repeated the words, the Bishop went on:

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

The fervour with which the old man recited the words "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" was really touching.

The Bishop continued:

"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts,<sup>1</sup> as we forgive our debtors. -

"Give . . . give—," repeated the old man, having apparently forgotten the words.

"Give us this day our daily bread," repeated the Bishop, "and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

"Give and forgive," said the old man at length. . . . "Give and forgive," and the Bishop seeing that his memory was weak took up the prayer again:

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Again the old man repeated the words with an astonishing fervour, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

And the Bishop concluded:

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

The old man's voice had an accent of loving and passionate sincerity as he said "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the beauty, for ever and ever. Amen."

The Bishop rose to his feet and his host followed his example, and when he held out his hand the old man clasped it in both his,

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

saying:

“How can I ever thank you for telling me that beautiful story of Christ; how can I ever thank you enough for teaching me His prayer?”

As one in an ecstasy he repeated the words: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. . . .”

Touched by his reverent, heartfelt sincerity, the Bishop treated him with great kindness; he put his hand on his shoulder and said:

“As soon as I get back I will send you a priest, who will teach you more, much more than I have had time to teach you; he will indeed tell you all you want to know of our religion—the love by which we live, the hope in which we die.” Before he could stop him the old man had bent his head and kissed the Bishop’s hand; and tears stood in his eyes as he did him reverence.

He accompanied the Bishop to the water’s edge, and, seeing the Bishop hesitate on the brink waiting for the steersman to carry him to the boat, the “holy man” stooped and took the Bishop in his arms and strode with him through the water and put him gently on the cushioned seat in the stern sheets as if he had been a little child, much to the surprise of the Bishop and of Lermontoff, who said as if to himself:

“That fellow’s as strong as a young man.”

\* \* \*

For a long time after the boat had left the shore the old man stood on the beach waving his hands to the Bishop and his companions; but when they were well out to sea, on the second tack, he turned and went up to his cottage and disappeared from their sight.

A little later the Bishop, turning to his priests, said:

“What an interesting experience! What a wonderful old man! Didn’t you notice how fervently he said the Lord’s Prayer?”

“Yes,” replied the younger priest indifferently, “he was trying to show off, I thought.”

“No, no,” cried the Bishop. “His sincerity was manifest and his goodness too. Did you notice that he said ‘give and forgive’ instead of just repeating the words? And if you think of it, ‘give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors’ seems a little like a bargain. I’m not sure that the simple word ‘give and forgive’ is not better, more in the spirit of Jesus?”

The younger priest shrugged his shoulders as if the question had no interest for him.

“Perhaps that’s what the old man meant?” questioned the Bishop

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

after a pause.

But as neither of the priests answered him, he went on, as if thinking aloud:

"At the end again he used the word 'beauty' for 'glory.' I wonder was that unconscious? In any case an extraordinary man and good, I am sure, out of sheer kindness and sweetness of nature, as many men are good in Russia. No wonder our *moujiks* call it 'Holy Russia'; no wonder, when you can find men like that."

"They are as ignorant as pigs," cried the other priest, "not a soul in the village can either read or write: they are heathens, barbarians. They've never even heard of Christ and don't know what religion means."

The Bishop looked at him and said nothing; seemingly he preferred his own thoughts.

\* \* \*

It was black night when they came to the ship, and at once they all went to their cabins to sleep; for the day had been very tiring.

The Bishop had been asleep perhaps a couple of hours when he was awakened by the younger priest shaking him and saying:

"Come on deck quickly, quickly, Excellency, something extraordinary's happening, a light on the sea and no one can make out what it is!"

"A light," exclaimed the Bishop, getting out of bed and beginning to draw on his clothes.

"Yes, a light on the water," repeated the priest; "but come quickly, please; the Captain sent me for you."

When the Bishop reached the deck, the Captain was standing with his night-glass to his eyes, looking over the waste of water to leeward, where, indeed, a light could be seen flickering close to the surface of the sea; it appeared to be a hundred yards or so away.

"What is it?" cried the Bishop, astonished by the fact that all the sailors had crowded round and were staring at the light.

"What is it?" repeated the Captain gruffly, for he was greatly moved; "it's a man with a grey beard; he has a lantern in his right hand, and he's walking on the water."

"But no one can walk on the water," said the Bishop gently. "It would be a miracle," he added, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Miracle or not," retorted the Captain, taking the glass from his eyes, "that's what I see, and the man'll be here soon, for he's coming towards us. Look, you," and he handed the glass to one of the sailors as he spoke.



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

The light still went on swaying about as if indeed it were being carried in the hand of a man. The sailor had hardly put the night-glass to his eyes, when he cried out:

"That's what it is!—a man walking on the water . . . it's the 'holy man' who carried your Excellency on board the boat this afternoon."

"God help us!" cried the priests, crossing themselves.

"He'll be here in a moment or two," added the sailor, "he's coming quickly," and, indeed, almost at once the old man came to them from the water and stepped over the low bulwark on to the deck.

At this the priests went down on their knees, thinking it was some miracle, and the sailors, including the Captain, followed their example, leaving the Bishop standing awe-stricken and uncertain in their midst.

The "holy man" came forward, and, stretching out his hands, said:

"I'm afraid I've disturbed you, Excellency: but soon after you left me, I found I had forgotten part of that beautiful prayer, and I could not bear you to go away and think me careless of all you had taught me, and so I came to ask you to help my memory just once more. . . .

"I remember the first part of the prayer and the last words as if I had been hearing it all my life and knew it in my soul, but the middle has escaped me. . . .

"I remember 'Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,' and then all I can remember is, 'Give and forgive,' and the end, 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the beauty for ever and ever. Amen.'

"But I've forgotten some words in the middle: won't you tell me the middle again?"

"How did you come to us?" asked the Bishop in awed wonderment. "How did you walk on the water?"

"Oh, that's easy," replied the old man, "anyone can do that; whatever you love and trust in this world loves you in return. We love the water that makes everything pure and sweet for us, and is never tired of cleansing, and the water loves us in return; anyone can walk on it; but won't you teach me that beautiful prayer, the prayer Jesus taught His disciples?" The Bishop shook his head, and in a low voice, as if to himself, said:

"I don't think I can teach you anything about Jesus the Christ. You know a great deal already. I only wish—"

*London, Christmas, 1911-18*

## THE RING

*Published in the Collection Unpath'd Waters (1913)*

IN my morning paper there was a paragraph stating that a Chippendale chair at Christy's, had fetched £1,250; the purchaser being Mr. Lewis the well-known dealer of St. James's Street, whom I happened to know. Another paragraph announced that the gem of the famous Salter collection, a Chinese vase of exceptional beauty had fallen to the same bidder for five thousand guineas. To increase the wonder the reporter added that the vase was only eight inches in height and a little chipped.

A day or two later, I happened to be walking down King Street when the awed comments of the journalist came into my head and instinctively I followed some people who were going up the steps into Christy's.

It was an ordinary day in the rooms, and there was the ordinary assembly of forty or fifty rather listless people, and over all, the peculiarly English air of quiet decorum and respectability. It was easy to resolve the crowd into its elements: the majority of the visitors had evidently wandered in out of mere curiosity without any intention of buying; the little knot of dealers held together, Jews for the most part, of ordinary types; but all quietly dressed, and in spite of a somewhat aggressive bearing, quiet in manner, the place evidently exercising a certain restraint. Sitting a little apart and with her back to me was a lady in black, with a boy of five or six by her side. There was something familiar to me in her appearance; but it was difficult to get a view of her face without obtruding myself on her notice and so I stayed where I was. Among the dealers I soon noticed Lewis: indeed his bold hawk features, fine height and powerful figure, would have made him conspicuous in almost any company. He nodded to me as soon as he saw me, with a friendly smile on the handsome challenging face. His hair was getting thin I noticed, gummy-bags too were showing under the large brown eyes; the chin and jowl had lost their firm outline—"Lewis is ageing," I said to myself, "suffering from too much prosperity—"

Meanwhile the sale went on in the quiet casual way that the English have made the accepted manner of gentfolk throughout the world.

A beautiful Chippendale tray in mahogany with a wavy border raised on little pillars, a very beautiful homely thing, at once useful

and decorative, delicate yet strong, had just been put up.

"A Chippendale tray," said the auctioneer, "will some one give me a bid to begin with; say, £5?"

"Five shillin'," retorted a voice with a strong German accent.

I noticed that the lady drew the child closer to her as she heard the harsh voice.

"Five shillings; seven; ten; ten shillings," repeated the auctioneer, and then paused.

Instinctively I looked at the lady in black; but she gave no sign.

The auctioneer swept the room with his eyes:

"Only ten shillings: ten shillings for this genuine Chippendale tray"; then (resignedly), "going at ten shillings, going, gone," and the hammer fell.

The lady's head seemed to bend a little. In spite of myself I had begun to be interested. The subdued air, the tone of quiet good manners, the smooth rapidity with which object succeeded object did not deceive me: beneath the surface there was a throbbing of hope and fear, a breathless interest; in fact the strain of life itself caught me, and before I knew it my heart was beating in excitement and I was all ears, all eyes. . . .

One thing struck me immediately. None of the rich dealers ever asked to have the things shown to them. When a vase was passed from hand to hand, they never glanced at it. Evidently they knew all about the various lots; they had examined them beforehand carefully. I remembered that there is always a preliminary day or two set aside for such examination. It is only the amateur, who wants to look at something at the very moment of the sale, and naturally such a casual person is at a considerable disadvantage.

A good many things like this had become dear to me, when two very beautiful powdered blue vases were put up. I had already noticed that the best things in the collection were Chinese works of art.

I asked for a catalogue, and found that the sale was that of Sir Robert Winthrop. Of course the lady in black was Lady Winthrop whom I had known years before as Mrs. Winthrop. Winthrop, I guessed, had died recently. He had spent twenty or thirty years of his life in China and was supposed to have known a great deal about Chinese art and Chinese customs. I had never been intimate with the Winthrops: one only saw them at long intervals when they visited London on leave; but Mrs. Winthrop had interested me. In the stagnant leisure of her Chinese life she had given herself to reading English and had a really astonishing knowledge of English literature and in especial of English poetry. I wondered vaguely what she had been

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

reading lately; whether she had been left well off or not, and then what those vases would fetch. . . .

"Thirty pounds, guineas: thirty guineas; no bid beyond thirty guineas, going at thirty guineas; at thirty guineas going, going, gone."

The tap seemed to be a groan. Lady Winthrop half rose; turned and looked a little wildly round the room and then sat down again.

I felt oppressed. "Thirty guineas" for such a pair of vases was absurd. I resolved to bid rather than let the next set go at such an absurd price.

The next lot happened to be another pair of powdered blue vases just as fine as the first pair: they seemed to light up the dull room with a supernal joyous radiance.

"Two beautiful vases," said the auctioneer slowly, "powdered blue, supposed to be unique, gentlemen; you must really begin to bid; what price shall we say, will you give me a lead?"—he seemed to look at Lewis, I thought.

I expected the first bid to be something decent: to my astonishment it was "five pounds." Even the auctioneer seemed loath to begin at such a figure:

"Five pounds is bid," he said, "will no one say fifty pounds?"

The dealers looked boredom at each other: one yawned openly.

"Say fifty," said the auctioneer, but there was no response.

"Five pounds then," he began.

"Fifty," said a gentleman suddenly.

Lady Winthrop, I noticed, half turned her head, as if to see who had spoken.

"Fifty," repeated the auctioneer dispassionately, then more rapidly:

"Sixty; seventy; seventy-five."

"A hundred," interjected the gentleman-bidder.

Lewis who had not seemed interested in the bidding now looked up at the auctioneer.

"Guineas," said the auctioneer in response.

"A hundred guineas."

"A hundred and fifty," said the gentleman. At this I noticed that Mr. Lamb the famous dealer of Bond Street, looked at Lewis and nodded; then he detached himself from the group of dealers and moved away as if to leave. In a moment the atmosphere of the room had reached fever heat: the gentleman was evidently a competitor of importance. When the bidding reached two hundred, he said "three": he was the stoker, so to speak; every big rise was due to him.

At five hundred pounds there was a pause, then a glance of

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

understanding passed between Lewis and the auctioneer, and the price again was guineas: Five hundred and twenty-five. The gentleman made it six hundred, seven hundred again was his bid.

From the beginning the bidding had been irregular, the gentleman jumping to round figures, while Lewis seemed to go up reluctantly by fives. It was a duel between them.

"A thousand pounds," was bid by the gentleman. Again Lewis's eyelids just dropped and the auctioneer immediately said, "One thousand guineas." Without hesitation the gentleman replied with "One thousand one hundred," and in a few minutes the bidding had reached One thousand five hundred, "and five"—was due I was sure, to Lewis.

"Two thousand," said the auctioneer a little later, rolling the thousand unctuously under his tongue: "two thousand," and there was silence in the room. "Two thousand guineas," he went on; it was the gentleman's last bid. Lewis looked up—two thousand one hundred and five. "Going at two thousand one hundred and five," repeated the auctioneer: "will no one make it two thousand two hundred? No advance on two thousand one hundred and five? Going at two thousand one hundred and five; going, going, gone."

Without a word the next lot was put up, but to my astonishment most of the dealers drew nearer while both Lewis and Lamb prepared to leave.

The scene had interested me intensely. I wanted to see Lady Winthrop, but I could visit her later. The first thing to do was to try to understand the extraordinary discrepancy in the auction price of things. A pair of powdered blue vases had fetched thirty guineas, while another pair hardly to be distinguished from them had fetched two thousand one hundred and five pounds: seventy times as much—the mere fact filled me with wonder, sharpened my curiosity. What could be the explanation of this extravagant difference? I took pains to meet Lewis in the doorway. His greeting was full-voiced and even more cordial than usual.

"Haven't seen you for some time," he said, and he threw to his rival, Lamb, a cheery "Good-day" and a quick glance of understanding. We went down the steps together.

"Won't you come and have a drink," I said, "and explain the auction to me?"

"Not a drink, my boy," he replied. "I'm getting a little stout. My doctor tells me to stop drink. It does me no good in the morning and afternoon. You see I do myself pretty well at lunch and dinner, and don't get as much exercise as I used to."

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"Don't you ride in the park, now?" I cried, drawing the bow at a venture.

"No time for it," he said. "I'm beginning to make a little bit now."

I laughed. "Your little bit must be something enormous, for ever since I have known you, and it's twenty years now, you have been making more than a bit."

"I've done pretty well, thank you," he replied, rubbing his hands together. "But I wish I did not get so stout. I've bought a little place in the country and taken up golf. You must come down and see us one day. The Missis would like you to come. She says you play good Bridge. I've enough to do playing in the shop. I like a bit of a stroll when I'm at home."

"Do you go out there every evening?" I asked.

"No, no," he replied, "I'm at Hampstead every evening. I go down to Chobham from Friday to Monday in the motor. I start about noon, if there's no big sale on. The big 'uns seldom begin before noon." All this while we were walking down towards the famous shop in St. James's Street. When we had come to the door he said:

"Won't you come in and look round? I've got some rather good things since you were here last—miniatures, snuff-boxes? You don't care for miniatures?"

I shook my head. "Was it you," I questioned, "who bought that—Chippendale tray? I should like that."

"Tray?" he said, as if not remembering at once.

"Yes, that pretty Chippendale tray."

"Oh yes," he said, "you can have it if you like, I'll send it to you when I know what it costs."

"It cost you ten shillings," I said

He stopped and looked at me quickly, and then a smile spread over his face and he shook his head:

"That tray is certain to cost me between five and ten pounds and cheap at the price."

"How do you make that out?" I cried. "You got it for ten shillings. I saw you nod to the auctioneer, and yours was the last bid."

"Well, I can only tell you that you shall have it for what it costs me, if you want it. You can't expect to get it cheaper than that, can you?"

"Certainly not," I answered, "I only want a fair price. And what about that pair of powdered blue vases you got for thirty guineas; I felt very much inclined to bid myself, but I did not want to bid against you."

"It would have done you no good, if you had, nor me any harm,"

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

and he laughed loudly.

"What do you mean?" I probed further. "I should like that pair of blue vases, but I suppose they would be beyond my purse?" I added questioning.

"What do you think they're worth?" he asked turning to me.

"I know nothing of the market-value," I replied; "but I thought them a beautiful pair of vases and I'd have given £100 for them very willingly."

"You ought to be in our business," he remarked drily. "I reckon those vases will cost £300 anyway and they'd be cheap at double that price."

"My goodness," I exclaimed, "what profit you'll make. Fancy buying them for thirty guineas!"

"No, no, no," he cried impatiently. "I told you they would cost me £300 not £30 and probably more than £300. I should not be surprised if they cost me £500 or even £600 if I wanted them, but I don't. They will go to Brown of Bond Street."

"I am entirely at sea," I said. "If a tray which is knocked down to you at ten shillings, costs you five or ten pounds, and a pair of blue vases knocked down to you at thirty guineas are sure to cost you from £300 to £500 and are worth at least £700, I'm at a loss. I do not know what it all means."

"That's just it," he remarked indulgently. "You don't, but if you had these vases at £500 you'd have a bargain. But when are you coming out to Chobham? The little place I've got is just beyond the village."

"I'd be delighted to come next Saturday," I said, "if I may till Monday."

"Come on Friday," he replied cordially, "and I'll motor you down; be here at four o'clock. Then I'll let you know what the tray'll cost you, and the vases too, if you want 'em. I haven't seen as fine a pair these five years. I liked 'em better than the next pair that fetched two thousand odd."

"Wonder on wonder!" I cried. "You must explain it all to me at Chobham."

"Alright," he replied cheerfully, "don't be late."

We parted in all kindness. I have more than respect for Lewis. I like and admire him greatly. Again and again he has given me good advice about the value of things, and he has gone through life as a conqueror. We are friends in the modern meaning of the word and have been ever since we first met. I came across him first in a P and O boat from Australia to London. He was a young man in the

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

steerage. I was struck with his face and resolute cheery manner and got into conversation with him. As a young man he was very handsome. Five feet nine or ten in height, broad shouldered, with eagle nose and bold hazel eyes, and a good-humoured, frank expression of countenance.

Five years later I met him in a little shop in Wardour Street. He had been a cabman, he told me, and had saved a little money and had married a girl he had fallen in love with, and a very pretty girl she was. With her "tocher" he had taken the little shop in Wardour Street, and already he knew more about English furniture of the latter part of the eighteenth century, which was then coming into vogue, and more about Chinese porcelain too, than anyone I've ever met. He had learnt it all, he told me, in the British Museum. He spent all his spare time there and in South Kensington. He wanted to know all there was to be known about his hobby.

His next translation was to the great shop in St. James's Street and he explained the jump to me in the most natural manner.

"I heard," he said, "that the Thomasson collection was for sale. I got in to see it. Never mind how, but I meant getting in and I succeeded, and I saw every piece of it, and priced them at their lowest. The collection was worth about £80,000 I estimated, and would fetch that under the hammer. Besides it contained the finest Hawthorne vase that had ever been seen in Europe and half-a-dozen other matchless pieces. I had a good customer, Mr. Alfred R—, one of the great banking house. I went to him and told him about the collection, said I thought a bid of £40,000 would buy it. I intended to offer £25,000 if he would let me have the money at five per cent., and if so (and this was the bait) he should have the Hawthorne vase for nothing, and two or three other fine pieces. He told me at once that he would let me have the money. After I had arranged with his lawyer as to the way it should be repaid (of course he was to have full possession of the things till the whole amount of principal and interest was paid off), I went to work. I managed to buy the Thomasson collection for £27,000 and moved to this shop on the strength of it. I got thirty-five thousand pounds for half the collection within the year, and have never looked back since. I've brought all my brothers up to the trade and set 'em all up in it, and they're all doing well."

The practical ability of the man was manifest—his energy, special knowledge and good-humoured determination, above all his intuitive understanding of men and their desires. I guessed that I should get from Lewis a very complete insight into what had puzzled me at Christy's.



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

\* \* \*

I met him on the Friday afternoon and he took me in his big Renault through the Surrey lanes to Chobham. I was not surprised to find his place an exceedingly picturesque old English manor house set in some five hundred acres of beautiful park. And the inside of the house surpassed the outside. Every piece of furniture was picked with expert knowledge and taste and every ornament as well. The pictures were few, but good. Yet the house was cosy and nest-like. Mrs. Lewis had grown a little stouter but was still pretty and even more intelligent seemingly than when a girl. The pair had no children, but their mutual understanding was perfect, their happiness manifest, or at least their self-content. After an excellent dinner I got Lewis by himself in his "den" and brought him to book about the sale.

"I want to know all about it," I said, "and how you explain thirty guineas for one pair of vases and two thousand for another, certainly no better."

"It's the 'Ring,'" he replied, "and I've got into it—that's all!"

"Now what may you mean exactly by the 'Ring'?" I persisted.

"Well," he replied, "it simply means I was rich enough and resolute enough to force my way in. Of course they didn't want me at first: but they had to have me," and he laughed.

"You forget," I cried, "I don't know what the 'Ring' is. Tell me about it: how it came to be and what it does, and then tell me how you got into it."

"The 'Ring' is made up of a dozen or more of the biggest London dealers," he explained. "They bid for all the big things, and sometimes for the little things too; in fact, for whatever they want; but chiefly for the best things.

"If any outsider bids against them, they run the article up to about the shop price of it, and if he goes to the top price or a bit above it, they let him have it. Generally of course, he is choked off mid-way; the dealers then buy it in. For example Brown or I would have given up to two thousand pounds for the first pair of vases rather than let any outsider have 'em. As no one bid seriously for 'em they were knocked down at thirty guineas, but that's not the price of 'em or the value of 'em even to us."

"What do you mean by the value to you?" I insisted. "Explain yourself."

"Surely it must be clear to you now," he replied. "No? Well. After the sale we dealers meet together and have an auction of our own.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

For instance the first pair of vases was put up again among ourselves in the 'Ring.' I told you they might fetch anything between three and five hundred pounds. As a matter of fact they fetched six hundred in the 'Ring.' Brown bought them; he first paid me my thirty guineas and then we divided the other five hundred and sixty odd pounds between ourselves in the 'Ring.' Brown has got the vases to sell: they cost him six hundred pounds minus his share of the five hundred and sixty as a member of the 'Ring.' If you want 'em I can get 'em from him at a decent advance, say for seven hundred and fifty or eight hundred pounds, telling him they are for a special friend of mine. Then they'd be cheap, dirt cheap."

"Good God!" I exclaimed, "the owner then only gets thirty guineas for something which is absolutely worth seven hundred at the lowest."

He nodded smiling.

"But suppose you run it up too high in competition with some amateur: what do you do then?"

"The proceeding is just the same," he replied. "We dealers get together and bid for the thing, and if it fetches less than I paid for it the 'Ring' makes it up to me. As a matter of fact the other pair was taken by Lamb at fifteen hundred and the 'Ring' had to make up a cheque to me for six hundred and five pounds."

"I see," I cried, "I see:—restricted competition among yourselves and a common interest. Do you know, my dear Lewis, your 'Ring' is a sort of ideal society, and if there were any statesmen in England, and not a ghastly crew of self-seeking politicians, your 'Ring' might give the idea of a working model of society in the future. If one could get a sense of the common good into Mr. Balfour's head and a sense of the value of strictly limited competition into Mr. Asquith's, one might begin to have some hope for the future of England."

"You had better tell 'em that," laughed Lewis. "We find the 'Ring' works alright, thank you."

"But what difference in money does it make to you to be in the 'Ring'?"

"It fluctuates," he answered; "one can't say. I have had some years before I got into the 'Ring' nearly as profitable as the present ones, but now my income is fairly regular—about £40,000 a year, I suppose."

"But being in the 'Ring' has made a difference to you?" I persisted.

"Oh yes," he replied, "an enormous difference in comfort and security. You see the 'Ring' does away with the evils of competition—

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

waste, risk and anxiety.”

“How true!” I cried. “What a statesman you are!”

“I was not the inventor of it,” he answered frankly, “but I know what it is to be up against it, and what it is to be inside it.”

“How did you get inside?” I queried.

“How do you get anything in this world,” he cried, “but by fighting for it, eh? You have to fight for everything worth having, and if it does not cost a fight, it is not worth much.”

“‘*Tout se paie*’ as Napoleon used to say,” I answered, “everything has to be paid for.”

“That’s it,” he cried, the fine eagle eyes lighting up, ‘everything’: that’s it exactly.”

“Now tell me how you got into the ‘Ring’”: I said stretching myself in the armchair.

“I just made it hot for them,” he answered simply. “Of course I knew Lamb and Levine were the heads of the business, and one day I told them I wanted to be in with them. They smiled at me and pretended not to understand what I meant.

“‘Dere vos no “Ring,”’ said Levine; ‘I vos jokin.’

“I told them I would try and make the joke clear to them in the auction room, and I did make it clear to them, over and over again,” and he laughed heartily.

“But how, how?” I asked.

“Surely you understand?” he wondered.

“No; I want the ‘i’s’ dotted, and the ‘t’s’ crossed.”

“Well you see, I knew Levine’s business and Lamb’s business too, pretty well, knew the sort of things that they had commissions to buy, what they really wanted, and I took care that they paid top price for them. For instance I knew to-day that Lamb wanted that pair of powdered blue vases; before he made a sign to me. I could guess where they are going: he will get three thousand sovereigns for them from Sir V. M—. Well, then if I had still been outside the ‘Ring,’ I should have run them up to three thousand pounds and then bowed to him and let him have ’em. As it is he can make a thousand pounds clear without any trouble. But if I had run ’em up against him, he would have had to be content probably with the difference between pounds and guineas. He could hardly ask his client four thousand for them, that would be a bit too thick. Well, whenever there was a pet piece he wanted, I made him and Levine go all the way to get it, and sometimes a bit further.” And again the eagle eyes lit up with the fire of combat and victory.

“But surely fighting like that,” I objected, “you must have got hit

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

sometimes. Now and then they must have scored and made you pay high for some things you did not want?"

"Of course," he rejoined, laughing outright, "of course they did and oftener than I care to remember. You see they are pretty able men both of 'em, with very long purses to boot. . . .

"In the six months the fight went on, I lost something like ten thousand pounds, but each of them lost a bit more than I did, and the richer a man is, the more he hates to lose any of it. See?" and he twinkled.

"How did the fight come to an end?" I asked.

"One morning," he replied, "I got 'em both, right and left: caught 'em napping; went off cheap with the pieces they wanted. At first I was thinkin' how to rub it in; when suddenly it came to me that that was not my game. When I reached the shop I sat down and sent Levine the one piece and Lamb the other, with a little note, saying they had cost me so much, and I thought it was more sensible for us to work together than to fight. That afternoon I got notes from both, thanking me and an invitation from Levine to come and dine with him. I went and there I found Lamb and the rest of the 'Ring.' They said I had knocked so loudly at the door, and so often, that they thought I wanted to come in.

"I told 'em that once inside I'd try and behave myself, which seemed to please 'em, and now we're all good friends. You see we all know each other—and I think they're beginning to like me," he added thoughtfully—"I don't mind goin' to a bit of trouble to please 'em and I'm not greedy. . . ."

"I don't quite follow you," I remarked. "I thought there was no sentiment in business."

"Sometimes sentiment pays better than selfishness," he replied, and his eyes held mine.

"You see I'm about every day: they're both very rich men and don't work so hard as they used to. Anything I see that's likely to suit them, I just buy it and send it along with my card and the price that it has cost me. I've fallen right a good many times and they're beginning to like me. . . ."

"Suppose you went wrong," I said; "they'd send the piece back to you?"

"They did that pretty often at first," he said, "but they know now I'm generally right, and so they keep the things. I'm always quite willing to have 'em back; for at the price I give an idiot couldn't lose over them. . . ."

The strong clear voice emphasised the expression of the hard-

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

beaked nose and naked eyes.

\* \* \*

I had rather a good time at Lewis's. With the large generosity which is a part of him, he insisted that I must take away with me a terra cotta bust of a Venetian nobleman of the sixteenth century that I had admired in his smoking-room. When I told him I could only take it by paying for it, he said:

"Send twenty pounds to the Jewish Schools: that'll pay me."

"But you never got that bust for twenty pounds," I persisted. "It's worth two hundred."

"It did not cost me quite twenty pounds transport, interest and all," he retorted. "I must not cheat the charity," he added laughing. . . .

A week or two later I called on Lady Winthrop. I found the house in disorder, they were evidently moving. When she came into the room I noticed that she, too, had aged in the last five years, aged greatly. Her hair was getting grey and her eyes were not as bright as they used to be, but they were still patient and thoughtful, perhaps more resigned in expression than they had been. Life tames all of us, but she was not afraid of seeing life as it is, this little woman, and of playing her gentle part in it.

"I had no idea you were back," I began, "or of anything that has happened to you: I, too, have been abroad. I just dropped in at Christy's the other day, by chance, and saw you."

"Yes," she said sympathetically, "a strange sale, wasn't it? Some of the things fetched thousands, more even than Robert ever thought they'd fetch, though he was a wonderful judge. But some of them went for shameful, absurd prices. There ought to have been a reserve put on them, I'm told now. Still, I did my best and the man at Christy's seemed kind."

"I'm afraid a reserve would not have helped you much," I said. "You ought to have got a few friends to have gone to the sale and bid for you—But it's hard to know what to do: the 'Ring' is so strong."

"The 'Ring?'" she questioned, and as I didn't reply, she added a little eagerly, "a friend of ours brought the great amateur Lord L— to bid for some of the things. He sent a pair of vases up to two thousand one hundred and five pounds, though another pair had gone just before for thirty guineas, which George said were better. But for Lord L— I don't know what we should have done," and she shivered a little. "Even now—but I don't see why I should trouble you with my worries," and she smiled bravely.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

"What are the worries?" I asked. "Tell me: I may be able to help you. Sometimes even to talk about our troubles makes them easier to face."

She nodded gratefully.

"You see we have to leave this house: it is too dear for us now, and Vernon, my eldest boy, will have to change into an Indian regiment, and give up Polo and my eldest girl, Lena, talks of going on the stage— Oh! I had hoped out of Robert's collection to have had at least fifteen thousand or twenty thousand pounds and have kept all my children with me . . ." her lips quivered.

"How much did you get?"

"About ten thousand pounds," she sighed, "when all the commissions are paid."

"Dreadful, dreadful," I could not help saying, for I knew that the collection should have brought thirty thousand pounds easily enough.

It all seemed dreadful to me, the Juggernaut of Life, and this helpless lovable woman victim. . . .

The ideal society, I felt, would have to take thought for the Mrs. Winthrops too, as well as for the "Ring." Half-remembered texts came into my mind and then this: "*Where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.*"

## MR. JACOB'S PHILOSOPHY

*Published in the Collection Unpath'd Waters (1913)*

THE first time I met him was in the train going from the Riviera to Paris. He got in at Avignon and was put into my *coupé*. As it was a large one with four berths I didn't much mind, but when I saw he was a Jew I felt inclined to curse. Not that I have any reason to dislike Jews; but they generally look greasy, and I have an idea that they don't like cold water. Still, this one was fairly presentable: a short, stout, little man, somewhere in the fifties, I should say, with the heavy beaked nose and pendulous jowl of his tribe. He was well dressed in dark blue serge, though the pearl watch-chain was perhaps a little loud, and the diamond ring went badly with finger-nails in mourning.

I saw at once that he wanted to talk, and as I had read till my eyes ached and become somewhat bored with my own company and the enforced idleness, I rather encouraged him at first, and in a little while took a certain interest in the man and his talk. He had scarcely settled

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

himself in his seat before he began: his name, he told me, was Jacob, Israel Jacob, and he was born in Lemberg: he need not have been so precise; his accent was unmistakable. He had spent a night in Avignon—"a stupid hole" he thought it, where he usually broke his journey to Paris; and at length, warmed by the sound of his own voice, he plucked up courage enough to ask where I had come from, and when I answered "Nice," he confided to me that "Monte," as he called it, was the only place on the Riviera he cared for.

"A shplendid hotel de 'Paris'—de best in all Europe," and he smacked his thick lips, while his eyes shone with delighted memories. Mr. Jacob enjoyed the good things of this world, it appeared, and knew a good deal about them too; for when I praised his cigars, more for something to say than for any other reason, he insisted that I should try one, and I found it about the best I had ever smoked.

"De '96 crop," he said, "but ach, only pritty goot; dere is no cigars now like vot dere vos dirty years ago; dey shpoiled tobacco in Cuba by manuring the ground, and dey haf nefer had any fine shtuff since."

The old fellow amused me: he was apparently a competent judge of some things and intensely cock-sure; but his self-indulgence had not impaired his brains or his health to all seeming; for though stout he was not fat, and evidently varied the fleshpots of France with the waters of Carlsbad.

As he talked of Monte Carlo he soon showed that he knew, at least by sight, the most notorious inhabitants and visitors. I say "notorious," because he said but little of the men of rank or position. At first that puzzled me, till I came to understand that he judged all men by the money they possessed. His admiration for Arthur Rothschild was only equalled by his reverence for Camille Blanc, and a cursory view of Mr. Alfred Beit going into the rooms seemed to have become a precious and abiding memory to him. One often hears that a Jew loves money, but I always thought that meant that he loves what money buys, till I met Mr. Jacob. I had no conception that money could be loved for itself alone—adored as a sort of deity; yet no one ever spoke of his god with more sincere reverence than Mr. Jacob spoke of a million. I don't think he meant to show this impersonal passion for money; it simply leaked out of him unconsciously, and I humoured him a little, for he had begun to interest me as a new type.

The only time he showed any irritation was when I made some mistake in my estimate of a man's wealth. In answer to something he had said, I had remarked carelessly that I supposed Baron Hirsch was the richest man in London; but he would not have it at all.

"Vot, him!" he cried, starting bolt upright on his seat, "he hadn't

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

ten millions: Beit has got twenty, and Astor, dirty, perhaps more: all Jews, dank Himmel!"

"But surely Astor is an American?"

"American," he retorted, "as much American as I am. Yacob was de grandfatter's name who made de money, a German Jew, from Hesse-Cassel. Dat's vy dey got de money; dat's vy dey've kept it."

"But is Rockefeller," I asked, "also a Jew?"

"Of course," replied Mr. Jacob; "no one gets dirty, forty, hundert million who isn't a Jew."

"How extraordinary," I exclaimed, "that all the richest men in the world should be Jews. How do you explain it?"

"Vell," he said, after a pause, "some explain it in von vay and some in anoder. Generally ve zay dat de Jew haf de best brains in de vorld."

"But if they are so clever," I replied, "surely they would show their genius in other departments of life."

"Dey do," he said; "take acting: Irving is a Jew, Beerbohm Tree a Jew, Alexander a Jew, Lewis Waller a Jew—all Jews."

"Perhaps that is why," I interjected, "the stage in England is in such a wretched condition." But he did not heed or even hear the gibe.

"Same ting in Germany," he went on; "all de great artists are Jews."

"But, after all," I objected, "acting is only half an art."

"And music, dat is an art," he cried, "eh? and all de musicians are Jews: Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn—Rubenstein."

"Really," I questioned, "I never heard that Von Beethoven and Mozart were Jews."

"Yes, Jews," he retorted, "all Jews, and Liszt, too."

"I'll admit," I replied, "that there are a good many actors and musicians Jews, but it is in getting riches that they shine, and I can't see why they should have the monopoly of that talent."

"Vell," remarked Mr. Jacob, meditatively, "Jews say dat dey vere kept under for centuries, treated like dogs, and not allowed to enter de professions, and so dey became moneylenders; but I don't believe dat: dey haf always been de same, from Jacob de patriarch in de Bible to me; dey always loved money, and always vere hated because dey got it. But in de past, de oder peoples used brute force against 'em, and robbed 'em; while today, in de reign of law, you can't do dat and so de Jew haf become master; he makes war and peace; governments and kings bow down to him. Rothschild and Beit in London, Rothschild in Paris and Frankfort, Bleichroeder in Berlin, Astor and Rockefeller in New York—everyvere de Jew is master. And in anoder



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

hundert years you will see vonders: you vill all be serfants of de Jew, or his slaves. Alretty he own all de papers: in Berlin all; in Paris all; in London most of 'em. You vait and see. Who made de war in Sout Africa; de papers in Johannesburg and Cape Town, eh? all owned by Jews, all. Ach, you vait. Who make dis war? De Jew, eh? He hate de Russian. Ach, you vait and see."

With his bald pate and beaked nose he looked more like an old bird of prey than ever, as he pecked and flapped about in his excitement.

"That may all be," I yawned; "but what puzzles me is, how the Jews make all the money."

"Make," he cried, "de Jews don't make money, my frient; dey get it; vot you tink?" and he leered significantly.

About this time we were called to dinner And I was rather glad of it. Mr. Jacob tired me a little; he saw Jews everywhere; and his eulogy of their wealth and power bored me. Still his last phrase stuck in my memory, I don't know why, and I often recalled it later: "Jews don't make money: they get it."

After dinner we returned to the *coupé*, and again Mr. Jacob would have me smoke one of his excellent cigars, and again I had to yield, for he would take no denial; but I was not inclined to talk any more, and so I moved about the corridor, and got out at every station in order to stretch myself a little before bedtime. When I returned finally Mr. Jacob was sleeping, and I soon followed his example.

\* \* \*

The next time I met him was in a Pullman going from Brighton to London, a couple of years later. He appeared overjoyed at seeing me, shook my hand warmly, produced an immense cigar and pressed it upon me, and insisted that I should come to lunch with him in his bachelor "tiggings." For once in a way I had no engagement, and had thought of lunching at the club, and so I found myself accepting Mr. Jacob's invitation. We got out at Victoria and drove to Piccadilly, where he had a flat on the first floor opposite the Green Park. I had always understood that Mr. Jacob was rich, though he did not brag about it; I felt sure, too, that he knew what good food was; but I was not prepared for the curiously fine taste shown in his apartments. In the drawing-room overlooking the Park all the furniture was old French, and the pieces looked like show-pieces, and were from the hands of the masters, I felt sure. The only fault I could find was that a table and a cabinet were too large for the room, and seemed to dwarf

it. The pictures were magnificent—Israels, Daubignys, and Manets that must have cost a pretty penny, and a fine Ziem lit up a dark corner with the opal waterways and magic amber lights of a sunset in Venice. But the pictures were not the only things which stirred my envy and wonder. Two Chippendale vases were on brackets by the windows, as beautiful in outline as the best Greek work, and there were early Italian bronzes scattered all over the place, which showed the art from root to flower. The room was more like a museum than an ordinary living room, and when we went into the dining-room at the back I was even more astonished. It was panelled in squares of old oak set diamond-wise with finely carved heads at all the points, and every panel was chosen for its flower; he had got it from a manor house in Suffolk, he said carelessly; and he had set off the dark wood with old German brasses and Chinese vases of hawthorn and powdered blue, so that the colour-scheme sang to the eye. Over the mantel-piece was a carved oak altar-screen of the fifteenth century, decidedly out of place, I thought, but in itself superb and full of interest. The table was a long, narrow, Renaissance table, and all the silver on it was of the time of Queen Anne. Clearly my friend, Mr. Jacob, had an uncommon knowledge of many arts, and knew exactly what to buy. He gave me an excellent lunch and followed it up with such coffee and cognac as one seldom gets in this imperfect world.

I had lunched so well and felt so comfortable, that my gratitude awoke, and I thought the least I could do was to humour my host's foible, and so, when we returned to the big room overlooking the Green Park, I began:

"Do you remember, when we first met, telling me that Jews get money, and do not make it? That phrase of yours stuck in my head, and I often thought that if we ever met again I'd ask you just what you meant by it."

His eyes narrowed in a cautious cunning way as I spoke, but vanity and volubility conquered.

"Money takes too long to make," he replied, "it's easier to get: see?"

I confessed that I did not quite see.

"Haf you never dought," he began, "who it is vins most pritty girls in life? Not the handsomest man, eh? nor the strongest; nor even the richest; but de man who goes after 'em most, who desires 'em most, eh? no?"

"By Jove!" I cried, "perhaps you're right."

"Of course I'm right," he went on, "and it is de same ting mit money. It is not de man mit de best brains, nor de man mit de greatest

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

resolution, vat you call character, but de man who most desires it who gets money—de greediest man. Haf you never noticed dat de millionare hate to pay for a cab or a dinner: he loves de touch of gold: he hates ‘parting.’ Dat is vy,” he remarked to himself, “dat cheques are so bad: it is easy to write a cheque: one does not feel de money,” and he rubbed his thumb and finger together as if he were handling a coin, while his eyes gleamed with a pleasure and passion that were sensuous in intensity.

“The Jew, then, makes money,” I said, lazily sipping my Mocha, “because he wants it more than other men, is greedier than they are.”

“Makes!” exclaimed Jacob, “makes nodings; one can make a million; but not ten, twenty millions; de Jew gets money, I tell you, gets it from oders; you, me, anyone. Only de fool makes money.”

“I remember,” I cried, “how stupid of me, of course he does not make it. But now you have told me why the Jew gets money, but not how he gets it.”

“Dat is anoder matter,” smiled Jacob, “but vays and means come from de desire. Haf you efer dought, my frient, vy de Jew sells old clo’s, old umbrellas, eh? He always begin by selling old tings, not new vuns. Vy? I tell you. Because de new tings have a price. Vun knows vot a new umbrella costs, eh? If it is cotton, so much, silk, so much, eh? Say a silk umbrella cost ten shilling, you cannot ask more dan fifteen for it, can you? or a pound at most. De value is too well known: de same mit a suit of new clo’es. If it is new, it costs two or tree poun’; you can sell it for tree or four, no more”: and he spread his hands in contempt. “De value is too vell known.

“But ven it is old clo’s,” he resumed, “you may buy de suit for two shillin’, and may sell it for two, tree poun’: not?”

“De Jew always buy vot haf no settled value; he begin mit old clo’s, because dey’s cheap; or old umbrellas, very little money needed; and he sell ’em to de need of de customer. He make profit, not twenty or dirty per cent., as he would make with new clo’s, but hunderts, tousends per cent.; dat is how he get rich; vot you tink; eh?” and his eyes glistened.

I noticed that as he warmed up and got excited his accent became worse and worse, and his speech more ungrammatical.

“Den de Jew gets on and deals in old furniture, vorks of art, pictures, china, bronzes, tapestry, curtains, brasses, marbles—everything vot is old: always vot has no settled value. He haf got a clock dere, eh? Made about 1770 or 1780. He buy it at a sale in de country; no bidders, he pay for it perhaps two poun’; mit his railway fare and commission, it cost him tree about: vell, he keep it, people admire it

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

much: he vait . . .

“Von day some one come in who knows, and say: ‘Fine clock dat, might have belonged to Marie Antoinette; I gif you ten poun’ for it.’ He say ‘No tank you.’ Anoder day he haf goot customer, who admire ze clock; ‘Vot will you take for it, Yacob?’

“He say, ‘I don’t know; dat belong to Marie Antoinette, dat clock; it is perfect specimen; look at it, beautiful clock, historical clock.’

“‘Yes, Yacob,’ say de customer, ‘but vot do you vant for it?’

“I say, ‘I don’t like to part mit it, beautiful clock; it please me so to see it dere; it’s vort hunderts of poun’,’ and I vatch him. If he say noding I know I may go up still more; ‘But dere, I am too poor to haf such a clock, cannot afford it—from you I would take, say, eight mal hundert poun’—it is noding; it is gifen away.’

“He say, ‘Oh, Yacob, dat is too much.’

“‘Vell,’ I say, ‘make me an offer; it is priceless, dat clock of Marie Antoinette—historical clock’; and at last I sell it to him for, perhaps, sefen hundert and fifty poun’. Cost me tree poun’ dat clock. Eh? vot you tink?

“No one make dat profit mit a new clock. De same ting mit pictures, mit everyting dat is old, dat haf no settled value, except de desire of de customer.”

In his excitement the Jew had mimicked the scene with astonishing veracity. No one could have reproduced real life with such fidelity if he hadn’t been painting from memory. In his time Mr. Jacob had sold old furniture and works of art, or I was very much mistaken, and that explained the beautiful things in his rooms. But I wanted to hear more, and so, when he paused, I tried to work him up again.

“But after all, Mr. Jacob,” I said, “all Jews don’t deal in old umbrellas or old clothes, or old furniture and works of art.”

“No,” he said, as if to himself, “dey begin mit de old clo’s and den dey come to de old furniture and vorks of art: all tings dat haf no settled value, and den—” and his voice grew deep with reverence, “and den, perhaps, dey come to the greatest ting of all, dey come to deal mit money itself, dat has no price: den de Jew begin to get rich—but rich, rich!” and he pursed his lips and nodded his head in ecstasy.

“De nobleman come in; he must haf tousan’ poun’ at once; he can’t vait: he haf promised a necklace to Miss Dolly Price of de Gaiety, and find he haf no money in de bank. Comes to de Jew for de money. De Jew say, ‘I haf no such sum, a tousan’ poun’; vot you tink! Dat cannot be foun’ in a minute, oh no! But by dis evening I might get it; you come back in an hour and see me, I try to get it for you; I do my best.’

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“Ven he go away I find out all about him; who he is, his family, frients, everyting: if he is able to pay, or his family able to pay, if he is goot or not. If he is goot, ven he come back I say, ‘Vell, I can get dat money, but I am afraid it will be tear; times is very hart. If I len’ you dat money for six monts, it is vort five hundert poun’.’ ‘Goot Got!’ he say, ‘a hundred per cent.’ I say, ‘It is tear, very tear; my lord, you had petter not take it: you don’t need to take it, you know; I would rather len’ it you for tree mont for tree hundert poun’.’

“Dat seem less to him; he take it for tree mont for tree hundert: I smile. He go away and forget all about it. At de end of tree monts I say, ‘Pay, please.’

“He say, ‘I cannot pay.’ I say, ‘Oh!’ den I make him pay hundert per cent, a month; eh; vot? I didn’t ask him to borrow—eh? not true? He owe it me; ’tis my money.”

He spoke as if in defiance, and then suddenly his mood changed to savage exultation.

“Oh, it is a great game, I tell you, de best game in de vorld—to play mit a man for his soul, for his money, and vin it. Ah, vot a game, and de fools go hunting and shooting all ofer de vorld; and I sit in my office, here, quiet, and haf sport, such sport—all kinds of game, little and big, and sport—ach!” and he sighed with memory of exquisite pleasures.

“A voman come in, a lady, she vant money—hundert poun’s; her daughter is so pritty: she make good marridge, later; only a little money wanted for dresses and parties. I sympatize: I understan’. She haf goot house, but small ingome: Florrie is so sweet. Vont I help her? Of gourse I vill. A little bill of sale on de furniture; no fuss; no trouble; and I len’ de hundert poun’, at fifty per cent. She very gradeful, and tank me, tank me. Ven de time come, she can’t pay; but vill pay interest. Out of good nature, I consent, but de interest go up. Next time she can’t pay. I am gompelled to be more severe. I vant my money: de interest goes up. Interest always goes up. She pay someting on account. I make perhaps couple of hundert a year out of her. Vot is it? Noding—eh? But leetle fishes are sweet”; and he rubbed his tongue over his red lips and pursed out his mouth, and smiled; I began to understand.

“Or a young man come in. He is in a bank; he tremble and is ill: I soon fint out: he haf taken a little from de cash; he must haf hundert poun’ dat night to safe himself from prison. Vell, I am very kind. I am sorry for him. I vill do my best; he must tell me who his fader is, and his uncle, all his relations. I vill see vot I can do: money very tight: he should come back in de afternoon. He come back. But I haf not

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

been able to fint it yet. He must gif me more time. Ven he come back at night he is excited, pale. I say he must sign bill for hundert and Fifty poun': I haf got de money from a frient cheap for him; but my frient must have two names; his fader or his uncle's vill do. Den he get mad; I haf kept him too late; he can't get name now; he haf no time: de poor fool, as if I am dere to give him time. I shrug shoulder: am sorry; vot can I do? Den he cry and look bad. Den I say, 'You vill pay it when it is due, eh?' And he swear he vill. 'Den,' I say, 'if de name of your uncle is on de bill ven I come back, I gif you de money, and I lock de bill in my safe till it is due. Den, if you pay, it is all right, and no one efer know.' I leaf de room, and when I come back, in fife minutes, de uncle's name is on de bill, eh? vot you tink? Den de Jew enjoy his little self; he haf ingome for life; if de man or his relations any goot—" and he smiled.

And as he smiled the room seemed to my excited imagination to fill with ghosts, unhappy spectres, with frightened eyes and quivering white lips, and behind them frenzied shapes of anguish and despair, cursing. . . . To shake off the horror I got up quickly; but Mr. Jacob had forgotten my presence even, for he went on, walking about and occasionally puffing at his cigar.

"Oh yes, 'tis goot to be a money-lender, but better still a banker or a financier. Oh, de banker; dat is fine; he lend to everyone; he get great profit; and fools lend him deir money for nodings: 'on deposit,' eh? Oh, a bank is goot, very goot." And he mused before he concluded: "De Jew is always vise; he always buy vot haf no settled value, and sell to his customer's need: dat is vy he get rich."

"But when he is rich," I said, knocking off the ash from my cigar, "what does he get out of it? He has spent all his life in getting money, and when he has got it, what then?"

"Vot den?" he repeated, looking at me, "vot den?" and he swelled in his pride, "Vy den he haf everyding in the vorlt dat a man can vant. He lif as he like and vere he like, mitout care or fear; he buy beautiful tings—pictures and silver, and everyone make up to him, everyone praise him, everyone glat to see him: statesmen gonsult mit him; great ladies ask his advice: pretty girls smile, and are kind to him, eh?" and Mr. Jacob leered again abominably: "Ach, my frient, I tell you; he is among men a king, a God. . . ."

THE MIRACLE OF THE STIGMATA

*Published in the Collection Unpath'd Waters (1913)*

IT was after the troubles in Jerusalem that a man called Joshua, a carpenter and smith, came to Caesarea. Almost before the neighbours were aware of it, he had settled down in a little hut opposite the house of Simon the image-maker, and was working quietly at his trade. He was a Jew, to all appearances: a middle-aged Jew, with features sharpened by suffering, or possibly by illness, and yet in many ways he was not like a Jew: he never went near a synagogue, he never argued about religion or anything else, and he took what people gave him for his work without bargaining.

To his loud, high-coloured, grasping compatriots he seemed to be rather a poor creature; but a certain liking softened their contempt of him, for his shrinking self-effacement flattered vanity and disposed them in his favour. And yet, now and then, when they talked with most assurance and he lifted his eyes to them, they grew a little uneasy: his look was more one of pity than of admiration. He was a queer fellow, they decided, and not easy to understand; but, as he was peculiarly retiring and silent, the less agreeable impression wore away, and they finally took the view of him that was most pleasing to themselves, and regarded him as unimportant.

Joshua seemed to accept their indifference with humble gratitude. He hardly ever left his room, and made no friends, except Simon, who modelled in clay and wax the little figures of the Phoenician gods. Simon had the name of a rich man and he was very clever; he used to paint some of his wax gods with rosy cheeks, black hair and gilded lips till they looked alive, and their robes were green and purple and saffron with dark shadows in the folds so that they seemed to move. Simon took a great liking to Joshua from the beginning, and did his best to break down his reserve and make an intimate of him. But even Simon had to content himself with moderate success. Joshua was always sympathetic, and would listen to him for hours at a time; but he spoke very little, and never about himself. Simon, however, used to maintain that Joshua's silence was more stimulating than the speech of other men.

Simon's wife, Tabitha, did not take to Joshua at first; she never felt at ease with him, she said, and his great eyes made her flesh creep. But, as she got to know him, she could not help seeing his industry and his love of home and a quiet life, and, in a month or so, she sent to Joppa for her sister's daughter, Judith, who was twenty-five years

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

old, and still unmarried. It was poverty, Tabitha knew, and not choice that had kept Judith single. The very first night after the girl reached Caesarea the two had a long talk, and Judith drank in all her aunt had to tell of Joshua and his peculiarities, and accepted the cunning advice of the older woman with complete submission.

"The girl is no fool," Tabitha said to herself, and began to take a liking to her pupil; while Judith felt that Tabitha was really clever in managing men, or how could she have contrived to keep her husband's affection, in spite of her age and barrenness, a thing which seemed to the girl wonderful? Tabitha's advice to Judith was not to hold off and thus excite Joshua's desire; but to show him that she liked him.

"He has been disappointed in life," Tabitha said, "and wants comforting. Anyone can see he's soft and affectionate by nature, like a girl: he will be grateful to you for loving him. Trust me, I know the kind of man: there was Jonas when I was young; I might have had him ten times over, if I had wanted to; and James as well, the rich tanner of Joppa who married the Levite's daughter. You take my advice, Judith, make up to him, and you'll get him. Joshua has a lot of the woman in him or I'm a fool."

Tabitha turned out to be right, though Judith did not succeed as quickly as they had expected, for it was hard to persuade Joshua that he was loved by anyone.

"I am old," he said, "and broken, and my house is empty of hope."

But the women were patient, and, one afternoon, Simon put in a warm word for Judith, and a little later the wedding took place.

The marriage was not unhappy; indeed, the union of the two seemed to grow intimate as time went on, and nothing occurred to trouble the peace of the household, except the fact that the marriage of Judith, too, was barren, like the marriage of Tabitha. Now and again Judith took this to heart and blamed her husband, but her anger never lasted very long. Joshua had a way of doing kind little things, even while he was being scolded, which was hard to resist. Still Judith always felt she would have thought more of him if he had turned on her and mastered her, as she had seen her father master her mother.

In the third year of the marriage, one Philip, a deacon, came from Jerusalem, and created a good deal of excitement and curiosity in the Jewish community. He talked of miracles and a Messiah; but no one believed much in him. And, as soon as he had left the town, the effect of his words disappeared, as hot vapour disappears in air. A little later, another wandering preacher, called Peter, came to Caesarea, and with



his coming the new doctrine began to be understood. Peter taught that one Jesus had been born in Bethlehem from the seed of David, and that He was the Messiah foretold by the prophets. But when it became known that this supposed Messiah had been crucified in Jerusalem as a sedition-monger, the more devout among the Jews grew indignant, and Peter often found it difficult to get a hearing. Still, he was a man of such passionate conviction that his teaching lent the subject an interest which, strangely enough, did not die out or even greatly diminish after he had gone away. From time to time, too, curiosity was excited anew by all sorts of rumours; so when it was told about that another apostle, Paul, had landed at Caesarea and was going to speak, the Jews ran together to hear him.

Judith had heard the news at Tabitha's. As soon as she had made arrangements to go to the place of meeting, she hurried across to her own house to dress and to tell Joshua. Joshua listened to her patiently as usual, but with a troubled brow, and when his wife told him to get ready to accompany them, to her amazement he said that he could not go, and, when she pressed him and insisted, he shook his head. In the years they had lived together, he had hardly refused her anything, and he had never gone against her wishes at any time without explaining and pleading as if he were in fault; so Judith was doubly determined to get her own way now. After asking once more for his reasons, she declared that he must go with her:

"It's seldom I ask you anything, and it is very dull here. You must come."

It pained him to refuse her, and, seeing this, she talked about the wretched loneliness of her life, and, at last, wept aloud over her poverty and childlessness. Joshua comforted her and wiped her eyes, but did not yield, and, in this plight, Simon and Tabitha found them, much to Judith's annoyance. Simon took in the position at once, and, in his good-humoured way, soon settled the difficulty.

"Come on, Judith," he said; "you know you would not like him so much if he were not a stay-at-home, and it is not flattering to cry when you have me and Tabitha for company"; and without further ado he took the women away with him.

When they returned that evening, Judith seemed like a new creature; her cheeks were red and her eyes glowed, and she was excited, as one is excited with the new wine. For hours she talked to Joshua about Paul and all he had said:

"He is the most wonderful man in the world," she declared; "not big nor handsome; small, indeed, and ordinary-looking, but, as soon as he begins to speak, he seems to grow before your eyes. I never

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

heard anyone talk as he talks: you cannot help believing him; he is like one inspired."

So she went on, while Joshua, from time to time, raised his eyes to her in surprise. In spite of her excitement she answered his mute questioning:

"If you once heard him, you would have to believe him. He began by saying that he came to preach Christ and Him crucified. You know how everyone is ashamed to speak of the crucifixion. Paul began with it; it was the crowning proof, he said (what beautiful words!) that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. For Jesus was crucified, and lay three days in the grave, and then came to life again and was seen of many. This is the chief doctrine of the new creed; we shall all have to die with Jesus to the things of the flesh, Paul says, in order to rise again with Him to everlasting life."

She spoke slowly, but with much feeling, and then, clasping her hands, she cried:

"Oh, it is true; I feel it is all true!"

"But did Jesus die?" Joshua asked. "I mean," he went on hesitatingly, "did Paul try to prove that?"

"No, indeed," replied Judith. "Everyone knows that a man is not crucified by the Romans and allowed to live."

"But Jesus was not a criminal to the Romans," Joshua remarked quietly; "perhaps they took less care in his case."

"Oh, that's foolish," Judith retorted. "Of course, He was dead; they don't bury men who are alive."

"But sometimes," Joshua went on, "men are thought to be dead who have only fainted. Jesus is said to have died on the Cross in a few hours; and that, you know, is very strange; the crucified generally live for two or three days."

"I've no patience with you!" cried Judith. "All your doubts come from your dislike of religion. If you had more piety, you would not go on like that; and, if you once heard Paul preach, you would know, you would feel in your heart, that he was filled with the very Spirit of God. He talks of Jesus beautifully."

"Did he know Jesus?" asked Joshua. "He was not one of the disciples, was he?"

"Oh, no," she said. "He made himself famous by persecuting the followers of Jesus. For a long time, he went everywhere, informing against them and throwing them into prison. He told us all about it: it is a wonderful story. He was going up to Damascus once to persecute the Christians—that's what they are called now—when suddenly, in the road, a great light shone upon him, and he fell to the ground, while a

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

voice from heaven cried:

“‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’

“The voice was the voice of Jesus. Paul was blind for three days in Damascus, and only got his sight again through the prayers of one of the Christians. Isn’t it all—beautiful?”

“It may have been the sun,” said Joshua slowly, “the noonday sun; his blindness afterwards seems to show that it was sunstroke.”

“But the voice,” said Judith, “the voice which came from heaven, and which the others didn’t hear, that wasn’t sunstroke, I suppose?”

“The others didn’t hear the voice,” repeated Joshua, as if he were speaking to himself; “perhaps then it was the voice of his own soul, wounded by those persecutions.”

“Oh, you’re hateful,” cried Judith, “with your stupid explanations. I can’t see what pleasure you find in them, myself. Besides, they hurt me, for I believe in Paul. Yes, I do,” she added passionately; “he is as God to me”; and, after a pause, she said:

“I’m going with Tabitha to-morrow to see Paul: I want to be baptised and to become a Christian, as Paul is.”

Joshua shook his head and cast down his eyes in doubt and sorrow, but Judith turned from him: she had said what she wanted to say.

The next morning, Simon and Tabitha came over early, and they all talked of the effect of Paul’s preaching: half the Jews in Caesarea had been converted already, Judith said, and hundreds were going to be baptised at once. Tabitha confirmed this, and hoped that Simon, too, would follow the good example. Simon, however, said that, for his part, he meant to wait: he would hear more, and do nothing rashly; but he did not wonder that the women were persuaded, for Paul was very eloquent.

“He’s ugly,” he went on. (“Oh no!” cried Judith, “he’s glorious!”) “I think him very ugly,” Simon persisted; “but his face gets hold of you: he’s nearly bald, with a long beaked nose and thick black beard; but his eyes are wonderful; they blaze and grow soft and weep and his voice changes with his eyes till your very soul is taken out of you. His teaching, too, is astonishing.”

“You see,” he continued, “Paul’s idea that the kingdom promised to us Jews is to be a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of righteousness, and not a material kingdom, seems to me good. It is practicable at least, and that’s something. And this Jesus of whom Paul preaches must have been an extraordinary being, greater than the prophets, greater even than Elias. He used to say, ‘My kingdom is not of this world,’ and he went about with the poor and the prostitutes and the afflicted. Did you ever happen to see him in Jerusalem?”

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

Joshua kept his eyes on the ground, and after a time replied in a low voice:

“He wasn’t much in Jerusalem.”

\* \* \*

Day by day, the agitation spread and spread, like a pool in the rains, till it looked as if there were no limit to Paul’s power of persuading the Jews. Conversion followed conversion; the meetings grew larger and larger, the interest in what he said more and more intense, till, at length, nearly all the Jews in Caesarea had become followers of the Nazarene. The excitement caught in the other quarters of the city. The Phoenician fishermen and some lands-folk began to come to the meetings, and, every now and then, some Roman soldiers, and here and there a centurion; but these more out of curiosity than emotion.

As Tabitha and Judith had been among the earliest converts, it was only natural that their zeal should grow when they found their example followed by the priests and Levites and other leaders of the people. It was natural, too, that Judith should continue to press Joshua to give the new doctrine at least a fair hearing, as Simon had done, to his soul’s salvation, but Joshua remained obstinate. One evening, however, Judith’s patience was rewarded. They were all talking at Simon’s house, and, at length, Judith quoted some words of Paul on Charity:

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

As she paused, Joshua looked at her for a moment and then said, simply:

“I will go with you to-morrow to hear Paul.”

And they were all glad, and gave thanks unto God.

On the morrow, when they drew near the meeting-place, they found themselves in a great crowd of Jews, for the doors of the building had been closed by reason of the multitude. Everyone was talking about the new doctrine.

“I like Paul,” said one, “because he is a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and aforetime a Pharisee.”

“Ah!” cried another. “Do you remember that splendid thing he said yesterday, ‘If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink, for so thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.’ Ha! ha! ha! ‘Coals of fire’! That was great, eh?”

“And true, too!” exclaimed a friend.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“And new!” cried another.

And the men embraced each other, while their faces shone with conquering enthusiasm. Joshua plucked Simon by the garment:

“Do you hear?”

“Yes,” said Simon impatiently, for the prevailing excitement was exciting him, and he didn’t like the interruption; “of course, I hear.”

Then a red Jew, with head of flame and beard of gold, started forward, and, uplifting his hand, cried:

“What I liked best in his last speech was what he said against backsliders and those who excite doubt by vain disputations; and, above all, that great word of the Messiah: ‘He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathered not with me, scattereth abroad.’”<sup>2</sup>

The man thundered out the words as if he were defying the world.

Again Joshua plucked Simon by the garment, and, when Simon turned to him, he saw that the carpenter’s face was pale, and tears stood in his eyes.

“What is it, Joshua?” he asked.

Joshua tried to speak, but could not for a moment, and, when at length he had drawn Simon a little apart, all that he was able to say was:

“Do you hear what they say?”

“Of course, I hear,” said Simon crossly, for he had enjoyed the vivid, impassioned talk; “but what of that? What is the matter with you?”

And Joshua asked:

“Are these men true witnesses? Does Paul indeed teach these things?”

Simon answered shortly:

“Yes: I suppose so.”

Joshua looked at him regretfully, and said:

“I must go, Simon; I could not listen to Paul. He does not speak as Jesus spoke; I must go.”

But Simon was impatient.

“Nonsense,” he cried; “what do you know of Jesus that you should contradict His apostle?”

And Joshua made answer:

“I know what Jesus taught; and this is not his teaching. I remember his very words once: ‘He that is not against us is on our part.’<sup>3</sup> He always preached love, Simon; and this man—I must go!”

Simon shrugged his shoulders and threw out by way of warning:

“Judith will be very angry!”

But, at that moment, the doors were opened, and, as Joshua

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

turned to go, he saw Simon carried away by the rush of the human tide that swept past and in a moment filled the building.

\* \* \*

From that day on, Judith took no pains to hide her coolness toward her husband. And even to Simon, Joshua seemed unreasonable; he would not listen now to any talk about Paul; the mere mention of Paul's name seemed to pain and distress him; and, as Judith went oftener and oftener to Paul's preaching, the rift between her and her husband widened from day to day.

At last the disagreement came to speech. One afternoon, after sitting still for a long time watching her husband at work fashioning a cattle-yoke, Judith said:

"I want to speak to you; I must speak to you."

Joshua leant on the tool he was using and paused to hear what she had to say, and she began:

"It is very hard for me to say it, but I must. You are the only Jew in Caesarea who has hardened his heart and refused even to listen to the teaching of Jesus, and that has hurt me. Now Paul is going away, and—and—he asked us before he left to write down any question we wished to have answered; so that his absence might not be so much felt."

She paused here, and seemed to grow a little confused, but, gathering courage, went on:

"I—I asked him something. I asked him," and she lifted her eyes to her husband boldly, "I asked him whether it was right to live with an unbeliever, one who would not even listen to the truth or hear it; and he answered me—"

She paused, looking down, and Joshua gazed at her with wistful eyes, but said nothing, and at length she began again:

"He answered me yesterday, and I remember every word he said: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness—'

She recited the words with a certain exaltation, and, as her voice rose defiantly over the last syllables, she looked up at her husband as if she expected to meet his anger; but she was mistaken. His eyes were full of unshed tears, and, resenting his want of spirit, she rang out:

"— and what concord hath Christ with Belial?"

After a long pause, Joshua spoke:

"Can this indeed be Paul," he asked, with a sort of sorrowful

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

wonder, "who calls himself the follower of Jesus; yet denies his teaching?"

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,' Paul says; but Jesus would have said, 'Be ye unequally yoked together with unbelievers,' for faith is stronger than doubt, as light is stronger than darkness."

"Oh, no," cried Judith, starting up; "it is not true. Paul says, 'Be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.'"

As she spoke, Joshua stretched out his hands to her beseechingly.

"Ah, Judith, that is not the teaching of love; and Jesus came into the world to teach love, and nothing else. Paul has made doctrines of belief and rules of conduct; but Jesus wanted nothing but love: love that is more than righteousness. . . . He may have been mistaken," he went on in a voice broken by extreme emotion; "He trusted God, cried to Him in his extremity, hoping for instant help—in vain. . . . He was forsaken, cruelly forsaken, and all his life's work undone. But he was not wrong, surely, in preaching love to men—love that is the life of the soul."

He spoke with an impassioned tenderness; but Judith broke in, her eyes narrowing with question and suspicion:

"What do you know of Jesus and what He said? You never spoke to me about Him before. Did you know Him in Jerusalem?"

Joshua hesitated, and his eyes fell; then he said:

"I know his teaching," and he went on hurriedly: "But all this is only words, isn't it, Judith? Surely," and his voice trembled, "you would not leave me after all these years of happiness for what a stranger says?"

"What Paul says is always right," she retorted coolly.

Joshua stretched out his hands to her in hopeless appeal: "Ah, Judith, why give pain; why add to that mist of human tears that already veils the beauty of the world?"

Judith replied solemnly: "Paul says that we only come to peace by leaving the lower for the higher way; no earthly ties should fetter us who are called to the service of the divine Master: I shall find a nobler satisfaction in the new life."

As she spoke, Joshua's face grew drawn and pale, and in alarm she cried:

"What is it? Are you ill?"

"No," he replied, "I am not ill."

But he sat down and covered his face with his hands. After a while she touched him, and he looked up with unutterable sadness in his eyes.

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

“How can I blame you—how?” and he sighed deeply. “I, too, left my mother and my brethren, in obedience to what I thought was the higher bidding; but, oh, Judith, if I had my life to live over again, I don’t think I should act in the same way. I must have hurt my mother, and it seems to me now that the higher love ought to include the lower and not exclude it. I should be more — ”

Again she interrupted him:

“Paul says hesitation is itself a fault; but I had no idea that you felt so much or cared for me so much.”

Her tone was gentler, and he replied, with a brave attempt at smiling:

“I have had no life, Judith, so peaceful and happy as my life here with you.”

Judith answered:

“You never say anything, so it is hard to believe you feel much.”

This brought the talk to sympathy and intimacy, and, for a while, there was peace between them.

\* \* \*

A little later, Paul held his last meeting. Before taking ship, he preached once in the open air, on the foreshore where water and land meet; and, of course, Judith was by his side. He spoke with heavy sadness of the parting, and with pride of those, his brothers and sisters, who would, he knew, remain faithful until the present coming of Christ. His words moved the people to tears and new resolutions; for they all sorrowed bitterly, fearing to lose him for ever. . . .

“The next day, when Joshua got up in the morning, Judith was nowhere to be found. He called her, but she did not answer; she was not in the house; he went across to Tabitha, and Tabitha could only tell him that Judith had resolved not to live with him any more and that she had gone back for a time to Joppa.

Joshua returned to his empty house and as soon as he had closed the door his loneliness and misery came over him in a flood and he stretched forth his hands crying in bitterness of soul:

“But why this cup, oh, Lord? why?”

\* \* \*

Months passed. Judith returned to Caesarea and dwelt again with Tabitha; but, in spite of the reproaches of Simon, she refused to cross the road to see Joshua, and, as Joshua scarcely ever left his house,



## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

some time elapsed before they met. One morning, however, as Joshua was returning home from the market, Judith hurried out of Simon's house on her way to a meeting, and the two came face to face. They both stopped for a moment, and then Joshua, in divine pity and tenderness, forgiving everything, went toward his wife with outstretched hands; but Judith put her hands before her face, and turned her head aside, as if she didn't want to see him; and, when he still came towards her, she hastened back into the house without a word. After waiting a while in the road, Joshua went slowly into his house with downcast eyes. Neither of them then knew that they had seen each other in life for the last time.

\* \* \*

After many days, Paul came again to Caesarea, on his way to Jerusalem; and; once again, all Caesarea thronged to hear the man whom everyone now recognised as the greatest of the apostles. As before, both Tabitha and Judith were diligent at the meetings, and Judith in especial was treated by Paul with great tenderness, as one who had suffered much for the faith.

One morning, Simon came in and told the women to go and see what had happened to Joshua; for he had not opened his door for two days, and was probably ill. The women went across and found Joshua. He had fallen by his bench, and was already cold; they could not lift him, and they came back to Simon, crying. Simon was angry with them, and said to Judith:

"He was too good for you, and so you left him. Paul says: 'Our faithful Judith,' and that's enough for you. Pish!"

Simon was too rich, Judith felt, ever to be a good Christian; but this time she bore his rebuke, for she needed his assistance. Simon went over with them, and helped to lift Joshua and lay him out straight on his bed, and there he left him to the care of the women.

Tabitha and Judith got clean linen and began to wash the body. Suddenly, Tabitha cried out:

"Judith, look! What are these marks on his hands?"

And she turned the palm of the right hand to Judith, and the whole palm was drawn together to a puckered white cicatrix in the middle.

"Oh, that is nothing," Judith replied; "an accident that happened to him in Jerusalem."

Tabitha repeated:

"An accident? How strange!"

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

A moment later, she cried again:

"Judith! The same marks are in his feet." Judith started.

"Feet?" And then: "I never knew that. They used not to be there, I am sure, or—oh!" she cried, as a new thought struck her, "perhaps they were covered by the sandal-strap; he never could walk far, you know."

As she spoke, staring and puzzled, Tabitha snatched the sheet from the body, and, pointing, said:

"Look! in his side as well," and then, in an awed whisper: "the Stigmata—the Holy Stigmata!"

Judith's lips framed the words, too, but she was unable to speak. When she came to herself, she said:

"Oh, Tabitha, let us go and tell Paul," and they hurried to the house where Paul dwelt, and, in a few words, told him the whole matter; and at once Paul set off, with all those who were with him, to the house of Joshua.

When he had come to the house and had entered in, and had seen the marks on Joshua's hands and in his feet and in his side, Paul turned swiftly to those standing by, and, holding up his hands, cried:

"Lo, a great work has been wrought to-day in Israel!"

And all who were with him shouted:

"A miracle! A miracle!"

And Paul began to speak, and, while he spoke, the Jews in Caesarea gathered about the house, and convinced themselves of the miracle that had been wrought on their behalf. And Paul went on preaching as one filled with the Spirit and with triumph in his voice, and soon the news spread to the port, and the Phoenician fishermen came and saw the wonder, and the Roman soldiers, and all listened now to Paul's words and were converted by him. For everyone knew that this Joshua, though a Jew, had not followed the new teaching, and that he had been as Paul said he was, the last unbeliever in Caesarea, and because of his unbelief, as Paul declared, and for a sign to the whole world, the Stigmata of Jesus the Crucified had been put upon him, and, indeed, the Stigmata were there, plain to be seen by everyone, in his hands and feet and side. And all the inhabitants of Caesarea, and of the parts round about, were converted and turned to the Lord through the preaching of Paul, and through the miracle of the Stigmata that had been wrought on the body of the last unbeliever in Caesarea.

THE END

## SELECTED STORIES OF FRANKS HARRIS

<sup>1</sup> This form of the Lord's Prayer is evidently taken from Matthew.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xii. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Mark ix. 40.